MEMOIRS

OF

THE LATE

MRS. ROBINSON,

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor of these volumes is but too well aware that the world will be little disposed to sympathize with an unprotected and persecuted woman, whose history, while it exhibits a series of calamities, wants even the recommendation of novelty. Yet there are some feeling hearts and candid minds to whom she dares appeal! If there are any who, after having attentively perused it, call in question the propriety of this publication, they are requested to recollect

the *solemn injunction* of a dying parent, and the *promise pledged* by a child in circumstances so awful and affecting. That many reasons might be advanced in favour of the suppression of these pages, the editor is not insensible; but, added to the sacred obligation imposed upon her, it is impossible that she can feel indifferent to the vindication of a being *so beloved*, and ever to be lamented, whose *real* character was little known, and who, in various instances, was the victim of calumny and misrepresentation. If a Daughter has erred in fulfilling the desire of the most affectionate and tender Mother, she must appeal from the severity of criticism, and the male-

volence of prejudice, to a *higher tribunal!*—The sympathies of nature will plead in her excuse.

Dear sainted PARENT!—You are now obeyed. If when we meet again, before the throne of our Creator, when the sorrows of this life shall be past, to receive the award of that BEING who judgeth all hearts—if, then, by one approving smile, you inform me that I have FULFILLED MY DUTY, I shall have my reward.

MARY.

MEMOIRS

OF

MARY ROBINSON.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF *.

AT the period when the ancient city of Bristol was besieged by Fairfax's army, the troops being stationed on a rising ground in the vicinity of the suburbs, a great part of the venerable MINSTER was destroyed by the cannonading before Prince Rupert surrendered to the enemy; and the beautiful Gothic structure, which at this moment fills the contemplative mind with melancholy awe, was re-

* Begun January 14th, 1798.

duced to but little more than one half of the original fabric. Adjoining to the consecrated hill, whose antique tower resists the ravages of time, once stood a monastery of monks of the order of St. Augustine. This building formed a part of the spacious boundaries which fell before the attacks of the enemy, and became a part of the ruin, which never was repaired, or re-raised to its former Gothic splendours.

On this spot was built a private house, partly of simple and partly of modern architecture*. The front faced a small garden, the gates of which opened to the Minster-Green, (now called the College-Green): the westside was bounded by the Cathedral, and the back was supported by the ancient cloisters of St. Augustine's

* This mansion was nearly in a ruined state, and uninhabitable in the year 1792.

monastery. A spot more calculated to inspire the soul with mournful meditation can scarcely be found amidst the monuments of antiquity.

In this venerable mansion there was one chamber whose dismal and singular constructure left no doubt of its having been a part of the original monastery. It was supported by the mouldering arches of the cloisters; dark, Gothic, and opening on the minster sanctuary, not only by casement windows that shed a dim mid-day gloom, but by a narrow winding staircase, at the foot of which an iron-spiked door led to the long gloomy path of cloistered solitude. This place remained in the situation in which I describe it in the year 1776, and probably may, in a more ruined state, continue so to this hour.

In this awe-inspiring habitation, which I shall henceforth denominate the Minster-house, during a tempestuous night, on the twenty-seventh of November, 1758, I first opened my eyes to this world of duplicity and sorrow. I have often heard my mother say that a more stormy hour she never remembered. The wind whistled round the dark pinnacles of the minster tower, and the rain beat in torrents against the casements of her chamber. Through life the tempest has followed my footsteps; and I have in vain looked for a short interval of repose from the perseverance of sorrow.

In the male line I am descended from a respectable family in Ireland, the original name of which was MacDermott. For an Irish estate, my great grand-father changed it to that

of Darby. My father was born in America, was a man of strong mind, high spirit, and great personal intrepidity. Many anecdotes, well authenticated, and which, being irrefragable, are recorded as just tributes to his fame and memory, shall, in the course of these Memoirs, confirm this assertion.

My mother was the grand-child of Catherine Seys, one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Richard Seys, esq. of Boverton Castle, in Glamorganshire. The sister of my great grand-mother, named Anne, married Peter Lord King, who was nephew in the female line, to the learned and truly illustrious John Locke,—a name that has acquired celebrity which admits of no augmented panegyric.

Catherine Seys was a woman of great piety and virtue; a character which she transferred to her daughter, and

which has also been acknowledged as justly due to her sister Lady King*. She quitted this life when my grand-mother was yet a child, leaving an only daughter, whose father also died while she was in her infancy. By this privation of paternal care, my grand-mother became the eléve of her mother's father, and passed the early part of her life at the family castle in Glamorganshire. From this period till the marriage of my mother I can give but a brief account. All I know is, that my grand-mother, though wedded unhappily, to the latest period of

* Collins's Peerage gives the following account of this lady: "Peter Lord King married "Anne, daughter of Richard Seys, of Boverton "in Glamorganshire, esq. with whom he lived "to the day of his death in perfect love and "happiness, and left by her four sons and two "daughters." Vol. vii. p. 273.

ıer existence, was a woman of amiable and simple manners, unaffected piety, and exemplary virtue. I remember her well; and I speak not only om report, but from my own knowedge. She died in the year 1780.

My grand-mother Elizabeth, whom I may, without the vanity of consanuinity, term a truly good woman, in the early part of her life devoted much of her time to botanic study. She frequently passed many successive months with Lady Tynt of Hasswell in Somersetshire, who was her godmother, and who was the Lady Bountiful of the surrounding villages. Animated by so distinguished an example, the young Elizabeth, who was remarkably handsome*, took par-

* A portrait of my grand-mother, when a girl, was seen by my mother at Haswell in So-

ticular delight in visiting the old, the indigent, and the infirm, resident within many miles of Haswell, and in preparing such medicines as were useful to the maladies of the peasantry. She was the village doctress; and with her worthy god-mother, seldom passed a day without exemplifying the benevolence of her nature.

My mother was born at Bridgewater in Somersetshire, in the house near the bridge, which is now occupied by Jonathan Chubb, esq. a relation of my beloved and lamented parent, and a gentleman who, to acknowledged worth and a powerful understanding, adds a superior claim to attention by all the acquirements of a scholar and a philosopher.

mersetshire, the seat of Sir C. K. Tynt, many years after I was born.

My mother, who never was what may be called a handsome woman, had nevertheless, in her youth, a peculiarly neat figure, and a vivacity of manner which obtained her many suitors. Among others, a young gentleman of good family, of the name of Storr, paid his addresses. My father was the object of my mother's choice, though her relations rather wished her to form a matrimonial alliance with Mr. S. The conflict between affection and duty was at length decided in favour of my father, and the rejected lover set out, in despair, for Bristol. From thence in a few days after his arrival, he took his passage in a merchantman for a distant part of the globe; and from that hour no intelligence ever arrived of his fate or fortune. I have often heard

my mother speak of this gentleman with regret and sorrow.

My mother was between twenty and thirty years of age at the period of her marriage. The ceremony was performed at Dunyatt, in the county of Somerset. My father was shortly after settled at Bristol, and during the second year after their union a son was born to bless and honour them*.

Three years after my mother gave birth to a daughter, named Elizabeth, who died of the small-pox at the age of two years and ten months. In the second winter following this event, which deeply afflicted the most effec-

* I may with truth, and without vanity, make this remark. The estimable being here mentioned was named John; he died on the 7th of December, 1790, at Leghorn in Tuscany, where he had been many years established as a merchant of the first respectability.

ate of parents, I was born. She d afterwards two sons: William, ho died at the age of six years; and George, who is now a respectable merchant at Leghorn in Tuscany.

All the offspring of my parents were, in their infancy, uncommonly handsome, excepting myself. The boys were fair and lusty, with auburn hair, light blue eyes, and countenances peculiarly animated and lovely. I was swarthy; my eyes were singularly large in proportion to my face, which was small and round, exhibiting features peculiarly marked with the most pensive and melancholy cast.

The great difference betwixt my brothers and myself, in point of personal beauty, tended much to endear me to my parents, particularly to my father, whom I strongly resembled. The early propensities of my life were

tinctured with romantic and sing characteristics; some of which I sh here mention, as proofs that the mi is never to be diverted from its original bent; and that every event of my life has more or less been marked by the progressive evils of a too acute sensibility.

The nursery in which I passed my hours of infancy was so near the great aisle of the minster, that the organ, which re-echoed its deep tones, accompanied by the chaunting of the choristers, was distinctly heard both at morning and evening service. I remember with what pleasure I used to listen, and how much I was delighted whenever I was permitted to sit on the winding steps which led from the aisle to the cloisters. I can at this moment recall to memory the sensations I then experienced; the tones that seemed to

ill through my heart, the longing hich I felt to unite my feeble voice the full anthem, and the awful hough sublime impression which the hurch service never failed to make upon my feelings. While my brothers were playing on the green before the minster, the servant who attended us has often, by my earnest entreaties, suffered me to remain beneath the great eagle which stood in the centre of the aisle, to support the book from which the clergyman read the lessons of the day; and nothing could keep me away, even in the coldest seasons, but the stern looks of an old man, whom I named Black John, from the colour of his beard and complexion, and whose occupations within the sacred precincts were those of a bell-ringer and sexton.

As soon as I had learned to rea
my great delight was that of learnir
epitaphs and monumental inscrip
tions. A story of melancholy impor
never failed to excite my attention
and, before I was seven years old, I
could correctly repeat Pope's Lines to
the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady;
Mason's Elegy on the Death of the
beautiful Countess of Coventry; and
many smaller poems on similar sub-
jects. I had then been attended two
years by various masters. Mr. Edmund
Broadrip taught me music, my father
having presented me one of Kirkman's
finest harpsichords, as an incitement
to emulation. Even there my natural
bent of mind evinced itself. The only
melody which pleased me was that of
the mournful and touching kind. Two
of my earliest favourites were the ce-

lebrated ballad by Gay, beginning, "*'Twas when the Sea was roaring*," and the simple pathetic stanzas of "*The Heavy Hours*," by the poet Lord Lyttleton. These, though nature had given me but little voice, I could at seven years of age sing so pathetically, that my mother, to the latest hour of her life, never could bear to hear the latter of them repeated. They reminded her of sorrows, in which I ve since painfully learned to sym- thize.

The early hours of boarding-school udy I passed under the tuition of the Iisses More, sisters to the lady of that iame whose talents have been so often celebrated. The education of their young pupils was undertaken by the five sisters. "In my mind's eye," I see them now before me; while every circumstance of those early days is mi-

nutely and indelibly impressed upon my memory.

I remember the first time I ever was present at a dramatic representation: it was the benefit of that great actor* who was proceeding rapidly towards the highest paths of fame, when death dropped the oblivious curtain, and closed the scene for ever. The part which he performed was King Lear; his wife, afterwards Mrs. Fisher, played Cordelia, but not with sufficient ec[illegible] to render the profession an object [illegible] her future exertions. The who[illegible] school attended; Mr. Powel's tw[illegible] daughters being then pupils of th[illegible] Misses More. Mrs. John Kemble then Miss P. Hopkins, was also one of my school-fellows; as was the daughter of Mrs. Palmer, formerly Miss Prichard, and afterwards Mrs. Lloyd. I mention these circumstances

* Mr. Powel.

merely to prove that memory does not deceive me.

In my early days my father was prosperous, and my mother was the happiest of wives. She adored her children; she devoted her thoughts to, and divided her affections between, them and the tenderest of husbands. Their spirits now, I trust, are in happier regions, blest, and re-united for ever.

If there could be found a fault in conduct of my mother towards children, it was that of a too unmited indulgence, a too tender care, hich but little served to arm their reast against the perpetual arrows of nortal vicissitude. My father's commercial concerns were crowned with prosperity. His house was opened by hospitality, and his generosity was only equalled by the liberality of fortune:

every day augmented his successes; every hour seemed to increase his domestic felicity, till I attained my ninth year, when a change took place as sudden as it was unfortunate, at a moment when every luxury, every happiness, not only brightened the present, but gave promise of future felicity: a scheme was suggested to my father, as wild and romantic as it was perilous to hazard, which was no less than that of establishing a whale fishery the coast of Labrador; and of civ ing the Esquimaux Indians, in ord to employ them in the extensive u dertaking. During two years this e centric plan occupied his thoughts b day, his dreams by night: all the smiles of prosperity could not tranquilliz the restless spirit: and, while he anticipated an acquirement of fame, he

little considered the perils that would attend his fortune.

My mother (who, content with affluence, and happy in beholding the prosperity of her children, trembled at the fear of endangering either,) in vain endeavoured to dissuade my father from putting his favourite scheme in practice. In the early part of his youth he had been accustomed to a sea life; and, being born an American, [illegible]stless spirit was ever busied in [illegible] for the increase of wealth and [illegible]our to his native country; whose [illegible]e and interest were then united to [illegible]se of Britain. After many dreams [illegible] success, and many conflicts betwixt prudence and ambition, he resolved [illegible] putting his scheme in practice: [t]he potent witchery possessed his brain, and all the persuasive powers [illegible] reason shrunk before its magic.

Full of the important business, my misguided parent repaired to the metropolis; and, on his arrival, laid the plan before the late Earl of Hilsborough, Sir Hugh Palliser, the late Earl of Bristol, Lord Chatham (father to the present William Pitt,) the Chancellor Lord Northington, who was my godfather, and several other equally distinguished personages; who all no only approved the plan, but commend ed the laudable and public which induced my father to su it. The prospect appeared full of mise, and the Labrador whale fisl was expected to be equally pro tive with that of Greenland. My rent's commercial connections we of the highest respectability; wh his own name for worth and integri gave a powerful sanction to the e centric undertaking.

In order to facilitate this plan, my father deemed it absolutely necessary to reside at least two years in America. My mother, who felt an invincible antipathy to the sea, heard his determination with grief and horror. All the persuasive powers of affection failed to detain him; all the pleadings of reason, prudence, a fond wife, and an infant family, proved ineffectual. My father was determined on departing, and my mother's unconquerable timidity prevented her being the companion of his voyage. From this epocha I date the sorrows of my family.

He sailed for America. His eldest son, John, was previously placed in a mercantile house at Leghorn. My younger brothers and myself remained with my mother at Bristol. Two years was the limited time of his absence;

and, on his departure, the sorrow of my parents was recriprocal. My mother's heart was almost bursting with anguish; but even death would, to her, have been preferable to the horrors of crossing a tempestuous ocean and quitting her children; my father having resolved on leaving my brothers and myself in England for education.

Still the comforts, and even the luxuries of life distinguished our habitation. The tenderness of my mother's affection made her lavish of every elegance; and the darlings of her bosom were dressed, waited on, watched, and indulged with a degree of fondness bordering on folly. My clothes were sent for from London; my fancy was indulged to the extent of its caprices; I was flattered and praised into a belief that I was a being of a superior order. To sing, to play a lesson on

the harpsichord, to recite an elegy, and to make doggrel verses, were the extent of my occupations; while my person improved, and my mother's indulgence was almost unexampled.

My father, several years before his departure for America, had removed from the Minster-house, and resided in one larger and more convenient for his increased family. This habitation was elegantly arranged; all the luxuries of plate, silk, furniture, foreign wines, &c. evinced his knowledge of what was worth enjoying, and displayed that warm hospitality which is often the characteristic of a British merchant. This disposition for the good things of the world influenced even the regulation of his children's comforts. The bed in which I slept was of the richest crimson damask: the dresses which we wore were of the finest cambric:—

during the summer months we were sent to Clifton-hill for the advantages of a purer air; and I never was permitted to board at school, or to pass a night of separation from the fondest of mothers.

Many months elapsed, and my mother continued to receive the kindest letters from that husband, whose rash scheme filled her bosom with regret and apprehension. At length the intervals became more frequent and protracted. The professions of regard, no longer flowing from the heart, assumed a laboured style, and seemed rather the efforts of honourable feeling than the involuntary language of confidential affection. My mother felt the change, and her affliction was infinite.

At length a total silence of several months awoke her mind to the sorrows

of neglect, and the torture of compunction: she now lamented the timidity which had divided her from a husband's bosom, the natural fondness which had bound her to her children; for, while her heart bled with sorrow and palpitated with apprehension, the dreadful secret was unfolded,—and the cause of my father's silence was discovered to be a new attachment;—a mistress, whose resisting nerves could brave the ſtormy ocean, and who had consented to remain two years with him in the frozen wilds of America.

This intelligence nearly annihilated my mother, whose mind, though not strongly organized, was tenderly susceptible. She resigned herself to grief. I was then at an age to feel and to participate in her sorrows. I often wept to see her weep: I tried all my little skill to sooth her, but in

vain: the first shock was followed by calamities of a different nature. The scheme in which my father had embarked his fortune failed, the Indians rose in a body, burst his settlement, murdered many of his people, and turned the produce of their toil adrift on the wide and merciless ocean! The *noble* patrons of his plan deceived him in their assurances of marine protection, and the island of promise presented a scene of barbarous desolation. This misfortune was rapidly followed by other commercial losses: and, to complete the vexations which pressed heavily on my mother, her rash husband gave a bill of sale of his whole property, by the authority of which we were obliged to quit our home, and to endure those accumulated vicissitudes for which there appeared no remedy.

It was at this period of trial that my mother was enabled to prove, by that unerring touchstone adversity, who were her real and disinterested friends. Many with affected commiseration dropped a tear, or rather seemed to drop one, on the disapointments of our family; while others, with a malignant triumph, condemned the expensive style in which my father had reared his children; the studied elegance which had characterized my mother's dress and habitation, and the hospitality which was now marked by the ungrateful epithet of prodigal luxuriance, but which had evinced the open liberality of my father's heart.

At this period my brother William died. He was only six years of age, but a promising and most lovely infant. His sudden death, in consequence of the measles, nearly deprived my mo-

ther of her senses. She was deeply affected: but she found after a period of time, that consolation which, springing from the bosom of an amiable friend, doubly solaced her afflictions. This female was one of the most estimable of her sex; she had been the widow of Sir Charles Erskine, and was then the wife of a respectable medical man who resided at Bristol.

In the society of Lady Erskine my mother gradually recovered her serenity of mind, or rather found it soften into a religious resignation. But the event of her domestic loss, by death, was less painful than that which she felt in the alienation of my father's affections. She frequently heard that he resided in America with his mistress; till, at the expiration of another year, she received a summons to meet him in London.

Language would but feebly describe the varying emotions which struggled in her bosom. At this interesting æra she was preparing to encounter the freezing scorn, or the contrite glances, of either an estranged or a repentant husband: in either case her situation was replete with anticipated chagrin; for she loved him too tenderly not to participate even in the anguish of his compunction. His letter, which was coldly civil, requested particularly that the children might be the companions of her journey. We departed for the metropolis.

I was then not quite ten years old; though so tall and formed in my person that I might have passed for twelve or thirteen. My brother George was a few years younger. On our arrival in London, we repaired to my father's lodgings in Spring-gardens. He re-

ceived us, after three years absence, with a mixture of pain and pleasure; he embraced us with tears, and his voice was scarcely articulate. My mother's agitation was indescribable; she received a cold embrace at their meeting;—it was the last she ever received from her alienated husband.

As soon as the first conflict seemed to subside, my father informed my mother that he was determined to place my brother and myself at a school in the vicinity of London; that he purposed very shortly returning to America, and that he would readily pay for my mother's board in any private and respectable family. This information seemed like a death blow to their domestic hopes. A freezing, formal, premeditated separation from a wife who was guiltless of any crime, who was as innocent as an angel, seemed

the very extent of decided misery. It was in vain that my mother essayed to change his resolution, and influence his heart in pronouncing a milder judgment: my father was held by a fatal fascination; he was the slave of a young and artful woman, who had availed herself of his American solitude, to undermine his affections for his wife and the felicity of his family.

This deviation from domestic faith was the only dark shade that marked my father's character. He possessed a soul brave, liberal, enlightened and ingenuous. He felt the impropriety of his conduct. Yet, though his mind was strongly organized, though his understanding was capacious, and his sense of honour delicate even to fastidiousness, he was still the dupe of

his passions, the victim of an unfortunate attachment.

Within a few days after our arrival in London, we were placed for education in a school at Chelsea. The mistress of this seminary was perhaps one of the most extraordinary women that ever graced, or disgraced, society: her name was Meribah Lorrington. She was the most extensively accomplished female that I ever remember to have met with: her mental powers were no less capable of cultivation than superiorly cultivated. Her father, whose name was Hull, had from her infancy been the master of an academy at Earl's Court, near Fulham; and, early after his marriage losing his wife, he resolved on giving this daughter a masculine education. Meribah was early instructed in all the modern ac-

complishments, as well as in classical knowledge. She was mistress of the Latin, French, and Italian languages; she was said to be a perfect arithmetician and astronomer, and possessed the art of painting on silk to a degree of exquisite perfection. But, alas! with all these advantages, she was addicted to one vice, which at times so completely absorbed her faculties, as to deprive her of every power, either mental or corporeal. Thus, daily and hourly, her superior acquirements, her enlightened understanding, yielded to the intemperance of her ruling infatuation, and every power of reflection seemed lost in the unfeminine propensity.

All that I ever learned I acquired from this extraordinary woman. In thofe hours when her senses were not intoxicated, she would delight in the

task of instructing me. She had only five or six pupils, and it was my lot to be her particular favourite. She always, out of school, called me her little friend; and made no scruple of conversing with me, (sometimes half the night, for I slept in her chamber,) on domestic and confidential affairs. I felt for her a very sincere affection, and I listened with peculiar attention to all the lessons she inculcated. Once I recollect her mentioning the particular failing which disgraced so intelligent a being: she pleaded, in excuse of it, the immitigable regret of a widowed heart, and with compunction declared that she flew to intoxication as the only refuge from the pang of prevailing sorrow. I continued more than twelve months under the care of Mrs. Lorington, during which period my mother

boarded in a clergyman's family at Chelsea. I applied rigidly to study, and acquired a taste for books which has never, from that time, deserted me. Mrs. Lorington frequently read to me after school hours, and I to her: I sometimes indulged my fancy in writing verses, or composing rebuses; and my governess never failed to applaud the juvenile compositions I presented to her. Some of them, which I preserved and printed in a small volume shortly after my marriage, were written when I was between twelve and thirteen years of age: but, as love was the theme of my poetical phantasies, I never showed them to my mother, till I was about to publish them.

It was my custom, every Sunday evening, to drink tea with my mother. During one of those visits, a captain

in the British Navy, a friend of my father's, became so partial to my person and manners, that a proposal of marriage shortly after followed. My mother was astonished when she heard it; and, as soon as she recovered from her surprise, inquired of my suitor how old he thought me: his reply was, "about sixteen." My mother smiled, and informed him that I was then not quite thirteen. He appeared to be sceptical on the subject, till he was again assured of the fact, when he took his leave with evident chagrin, but not without expressing his hopes that, on his return to England, for he was going on a two years expedition, I should be still disengaged. His ship foundered at sea a few months after, and this amiable gallant officer perished.

I had remained a year and two months with Mrs. Lorington, when

pecuniary derangements obliged her to give up her school. Her father's manners were singularly disgusting, as was his appearance; for he wore a silvery beard which reached to his breast, and a kind of Persian robe that gave him the external appearance of a necromancer. He was of the anabaptist persuasion, and so stern in his conversation that the young pupils were exposed to perpetual terror: added to these circumstances, the failing of his daughter became so evident that, even during school hours, she was frequently in a state of confirmed intoxication. These events conspired to break up the establishment, and I was shortly after removed to a boarding school at Battersea.

The mistress of this seminary, Mrs. Leigh, was a lively, sensible and accomplished woman: her daughter was

only a few years older than myself, and extremely amiable as well as lovely. Here I might have been happy, but my father's remissness in sending pecuniary supplies, and my mother's dread of pecuniary inconvenience, induced her to remove me: my brother nevertheless still remained under the care of the Rev. Mr. Gore, at Chelsea.

Several months elapsed, and no remittance arrived from my father. I was now near fourteen years old, and my mother began to foresee the vicissitudes to which my youth might be exposed, unprotected, tenderly educated, and without the advantages of fortune. My father's impracticable scheme had impoverished his fortune, and deprived his children of that affluence, for which, in their infancy, they had been taught to hope. I cannot speak of my own person, but my par-

tial friends were too apt to flatter me. I was naturally of a pensive and melancholly character: my reflections on the changes of fortune frequently gave me an air of dejection, which perhaps excited an interest beyond what might have been awakened by the vivacity or bloom of juvenility.

I adored my mother; she was the mildest the most unoffending of existing mortals: her temper was cheerful, as her heart was innocent: she beheld her children as it seemed fatherless, and she resolved by honourable means to support them. For this purpose, a convenient house was hired at Little Chelsea, and furnished for a lady's boarding-school. Assistants of every kind were engaged, and I was deemed worthy of an occupation that flattered my self-love, and impressed my mind with a sort of domestic consequence.

The English language was my department in the seminary, and I was permitted to select passages both in prose and verse for the studies of my infant pupils: it was also my occupation to superintend their wardrobes, to see them dressed and undressed by the servants of half boarders, and to read sacred and moral lessons, on saint's-days and Sunday evenings.

Shortly after my mother had established herself at Chelsea, on a summer's evening, as I was sitting at the window, I heard a deep sigh or rather a groan of anguish, which suddenly attracted my attention. The night was approaching rapidly, and I looked towards the gate before the house, where I observed a woman evidently labouring under excessive affliction: I instantly descended and approached her. She, bursting into tears, asked whether

I did not know her. Her dress was torn and filthy :—she was almost naked ;--and an old bonnet, which nearly hid her face, so completely disfigured her features that I had not the smallest idea of the person who was then almost sinking before me. I gave her a small sum of money, and inquired the cause of her apparent agony : she took my hand, and pressed it to her lips.—"Sweet girl," said she, "you are still the angel I ever knew you !"—I was astonished ; she raised her bonnet—her fine dark eyes met mine. It was Mrs. Lorington.—I led her into the house ; my mother was not at home : I took her to my chamber ; and, with the assistance of a lady who was our French teacher, I clothed and comforted her. She refused to say how she came to be in so deplorable a situation ; and took her leave. It was

in vain that I entreated, that I conjured her to let me know where I might send to her. She refused to give me her address, but promised that in a few days she would call upon me again. It is impossible to describe the wretched appearance of this accomplished woman! The failing to which she had now yielded, as to a monster that would destroy her, was evident even at the moment when she was speaking to me. I saw no more of her; but to my infinite regret I was informed, some years after, that she had died the martyr of a premature decay, brought on by the indulgence of her propensity to intoxication, in—the workhouse of Chelsea!

The number of my mother's pupils, in a few months, amounted to ten or twelve: and, just at a period when an honourable independence

promised to cheer the days of an unexampled parent, my father unexpectedly returned from America. The pride of his soul was deeply wounded by the step which my mother had taken: he was offended even beyond the bounds of reason: he considered his name as disgraced, and his conjugal reputation tarnished, by the public mode which his wife had adopted of revealing to the world her unprotected situation. A prouder heart never palpitated in the breast of man, than that of my father: tenacious of fame, ardent in the pursuit of visionary schemes, he could not endure the exposure of his altered fortune; while hope still beguiled him with her flattering promise, that time would favour his projects, and fortune, at some future period, reward him with success.

At the expiration of eight months my mother, by my father's positive command, broke up her establishment, and returned to London. She engaged lodgings in the neighbourhood of Marylebone. My father then resided in Green-street, Grosvenor-square. His provision for his family was scanty, his visits were few. He had a new scheme on foot respecting the Labrador Coast, the particulars of which I do not remember; and all his zeal, united with all his interest, was employed in promoting its accomplishment. My mother, knowing that my father publicly resided with his mistress, did not even hope for his returning affection. She devoted herself to her children, and endured her sorrows with the patience of conscious rectitude.

At this period my father frequently called upon us, and often attended me while we walked in the fields near Marylebone. His conversation was generally of a domestic nature; and he always lamented that fatal attachment which was now too strongly cemented by time and obligations ever to be dissolved without an ample provision for Elenor, which was the name of my father's mistress. In one of our morning walks we called upon the Earl of Northington, my father having some commercial business to communicate to his Lordship. Lord Northington then resided in Berkeley-square, two doors from Hill-street, in the house which is now occupied by Lord Robert Spencer. We were received with the most marked attention and politeness; (I was presented as the goddaughter of the late Chancellor Lord

Northington,) and my father was re quested to dine with his lordship a few days after. From this period I frequently saw Lord Northington, and always experienced from him the most flattering and gratifying civility. I was then a child, not more than fourteen years of age.

The finishing points of my education I received at Oxford-house, Marylebone: I was at this period within a few months of fifteen years of age, tall, and nearly such as my partial friends, the few whose affections have followed me from childhood, remember me. My early love for lyric harmony had led me to a fondness for the more sublime scenes of dramatic poetry. I embraced every leisure moment to write verses; I even fancied that I could compose a tragedy, and more than once unsuc-

cessfully attempted the arduous undertaking.

The dancing-master at Oxford-house, Mr. Hussey, was then ballet master of Covent-garden theatre. Mrs. Hervey, the governess, mentioned me to him as possessing an extraordinary genius for dramatic exhibitions. My figure was commanding for my age, and (my father's pecuniary embarassments augmenting by the failure of another American project) my mother was consulted as to the propriety of my making the stage my profession. Many cited examples of females who, even in that perilous and arduous situation, preserved an unspotted fame, inclined her to listen to the suggestion, and to allow of my consulting some master of the art, as to my capability of becoming an ornament to the theatre.

Previous to this idea my father had again quitted England: he left his wife with assurances of good-will—his children with all the agonies of parental regret. When he took leave of my mother, his emphatic words were these—I never shall forget them—"Take care that no dishonour falls upon my daughter. If she is not safe at my return, I will annihilate you." My mother heard the stern injunction, and trembled while he repeated it.

In consequence of my wish to appear on the stage, I was introduced to Mr. Hull, of Covent-garden theatre; he then resided in King-street, Soho. He heard me recite some passages of the character of Jane Shore, and seemed delighted with my attempt. I was shortly after presented, by a friend of my mother's, to Mr. Gar-

rick: Mr. Murphy, the celebrated dramatic poet, was one of the party; and we passed the evening at the house of the British Roscius in the Adelphi. This was during the last year that he dignified the profession by his public appearance. Mr. Garrick's encomiums were of the most gratifying kind. He determined that he would appear in the same play with me on the first night's trial; but what part to choose for my *début* was a difficult question. I was too young for any thing beyond the girlish character; and the dignity of tragedy afforded but few opportunities for the display of such juvenile talents. After some hesitation, my tutor fixed on the part of Cordelia. His own Lear can never be forgotten.

It was not till the period when every thing was arranged for my ap-

pearance that the last solemn injunction, so emphatically uttered by my father, nearly palsied my mother's resolution. She dreaded the perils, the temptations, to which an unprotected girl would be exposed in so public a situation; while my ardent fancy was busied in contemplating a thousand triumphs, in which my vanity would be publicly gratified, without the smallest sacrifice of my private character.

While this plan was in agitation, I was one evening at Drury-lane theatre, with my mother and a small party of her friends, when an officer entered the box. His eyes were fixed on me, and his persevering attention at length nearly overwhelmed me with confusion. The entertainment being finished, we departed. The stranger followed us. At that period

my mother resided in Southampton-buildings, Chancery-lane, for the advantage of the protection which a venerable and respectable friend offered, at a moment when it was so necessary. This friend was the late Samuel Cox, Esq. the intimate friend of Mr. Garrick, and an honour to those laws of which he was a distinguished professor.

It was Mr. Garrick's particular request that I would frequent the theatre, as much as possible, till the period fixed on for my appearance on the stage. I had now juſt completed my fifteenth year, and my little heart throbbed with impatience for the hour of trial. My tutor was most sanguine in his expectations of my success, and every rehearsal seemed to strengthen his flattering opinion.

It happened that, several evenings following, the stranger officer, whose

name, for motives of delicacy towards his family, I forbear to mention, followed me to and from the theatre. It was in vain that he offered his attentions in the box; my mother's frown and assiduous care repulsed them effectually. But the perseverance of a bad mind in the accomplishment of a bad action is not to be subdued. A letter was written and conveyed to me through the hands of a female servant. I opened it; I read a declaration of the most ardent love: the writer avowed himself the son of Lady *****, and offered marriage: he was graceful and handsome; I instantly delivered the letter to my mother;—and shortly after he was, by an acquaintance, presented with decorous ceremony.

The idea of my appearing on the stage seemed to distract this accomplished suitor. My mother, who but

half approved a dramatic life, was more than *half* inclined to favour the addresses of Captain ******. The injunction of my father every hour became more indelibly impressed on her memory; she knew his stern and invincible sense of honour too well to hazard the thought of awakening it to vengeance.

After a short period, the friend who had presented Capt. *******, alarmed for my safety, and actuated by a liberal wish to defend me from the artifice of his associate, waited on my mother; and, after some hesitation, informed her that my lover was *already married!* that he had a young and amiable wife in a sister kingdom, and that he apprehended some diabolical stratagem for the enthralment of my honour. My mother's consternation was infinite: the important se-

cret was communicated to me, and I felt little regret in the loss of a husband, when I reflected that a matrimonial alliance would have compelled me to relinquish my theatrical profession.

I now had also at this period another professed admirer; a man of a splendid fortune, but nearly old enough to be my grandfather: this suit I never would listen to; and the drama, the delightful drama, seemed the very criterion of all human happiness.

I now found myself an object of attention whenever I appeared at the theatre. I had been too often in public not to be observed; and it was buzzed about that I was the juvenile pupil of Garrick,—the promised Cordelia. My person improved daily; yet a sort of dignified air, which from a child I had acquired, effectually

shielded me from the attacks of impertinence or curiosity. Garrick was delighted with every thing I did. He would sometimes dance a minuet with me, sometimes request me to sing the favourite ballads of the day; but the circumstance which most pleased him was my tone of voice, which he frequently told me closely resembled that of his favourite Cibber.

Never shall I forget the enchanting hours I passed in Mr. Garrick's society: he appeared to me as one who possessed more power, both to awe and to attract, than any man I ever met with. His smile was facinating; but he had at times a restless peevishness of tone, which excessively affected his hearers: at least it affected me so that I never shall forget it.

Opposite to the house in which I resided lived John Vernon, Esq. an

eminent solicitor. I observed a young inmate of his habitation frequently watching me with more than ordinary attention. He was handsome in person, and his countenance was overcast by a sort of languor, the effect of sickness, which rendered it peculiarly interesting. Frequently when I approached the window of our drawing-room this young observer would bow, or turn away with evident emotion. I related the circumstance to my mother; and from that time the lower shutters of our windows were perpetually closed. The young lawyer often excited my mirth, and my mother's indignation; and the injunction of my father was frequently repeated by her, with the addition of her wish, that I was "once well married."

Every attention which was now paid to me augmented my dear mo-

ther's apprehensions. She fancied every man a seducer, and every hour an hour of accumulating peril! I know what she was doomed to feel; for that Being, who formed my sensitive and perpetually aching heart, knows that *I have since felt it*.

Among other friends, who were in the habit of visiting my mother, there was one, a Mr. Wayman, an attorney, of whom she entertained the highest opinion. He was distinguished by the patronage of Mr. Cox, and his reputation required no other voucher. One evening, a party of six was proposed for the following Sunday; with much persuasion my mother consented to go, and to allow that I should also attend her. Greenwich was the place fixed on for the dinner; and we prepared for the day of recreation. It was then the fashion to wear silks. I re-

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member that I wore a nightgown of pale blue lustring, with a chip hat, trimmed with ribbands of the same colour. Never was I dressed so perfectly to my own satisfaction: I anticipated a day of admiration;—Heaven can bear witness that, to me, it was a day of fatal victory!

On our stopping at the Star and Garter, at Greenwich, the person who came to hand me from the carriage was our opposite neighbour in Southampton-buildings. I was confused; but my mother was indignant! Mr. Wayman presented his young friend —that friend who was ordained to be MY HUSBAND.

Our party dined; and early in the evening we returned to London. Mr. Robinson remained at Greenwich for the benefit of the air, being recently recovered from a fit of sickness. Dur-

ing the remainder of the evening, Mr. Wayman expatiated on the many good qualities of his friend Mr. Robinson, spoke of his future expectations from a rich old uncle, of his probable advancement in his profession, and, more than all, of his enthusiastic admiration of me.

A few days after, Mr. Robinson paid my mother a visit. We had now removed to Villiers-street, York-buildings: my mother's fondness for books of a moral and religious character was not lost upon my new lover; and elegantly bound editions of Hervey's Meditations, with some others of a similar description, were presented, as small tokens of admiration and respect. My mother was beguiled by these little interesting attentions, and soon began to feel a strong predilection in favour of Mr. Robinson.

Every day some new mark of respect augmented my mother's favourable opinion; till Mr. Robinson became so great a favourite that he seemed to her the most perfect of existing beings. Just at this period, my brother George sickened of the small-pox: my mother idolized him; he was dangerously ill:—Mr. Robinson was indefatigable in his attentions; and my appearance on the stage was postponed till the period of his perfect recovery. Day and night Mr. Robinson devoted himself to the task of consoling my mother, and of attending to her darling boy: hourly, and indeed momentarily, Mr. Robinson's praises were reiterated with enthusiasm by my mother. He was "the kindest, the best of mortals!" the least addicted to worldly follies—and the man,

of all others, whom she should adore as a *son in law*

My brother recovered, at the period when I sickened for the infection of his disease. I felt little terror at the approaches of a dangerous and deforming malady; for, I know not why, but personal beauty has never been to me an object of material solicitude. It was now that Mr. Robinson exerted all his assiduity to win my affections: it was when a destructive disorder menaced my features, and the few graces that nature had lent them, that he professed a disinterested fondness: every day he attended with the zeal of a brother; and that zeal made an impression of gratitude upon my heart, which was the source of all my succeeding sorrows.

During my illness, Mr. Robinson so powerfully wrought upon the feelings

of my mother, that she prevailed on me to promise, in case I should recover, to give him my hand in marriage. The words of my father were frequently repeated, not without some inuendos that I refused my ready consent to an union with Mr. Robinson, from a blind partiality to the libertine Captain *******. Repeatedly urged and hourly reminded of my father's vow, I at last consented; and the bans were published while I was yet lying on a bed of sickness:—I was then only a few months advanced in my sixteenth year.

My mother, whose affection for me was boundless, notwithstanding her hopes of my forming an alliance that would be productive of felicity, still felt the most severe pain at the thought of our approaching separation. She was estranged from a husband's

affections: she had treasured up all her fondest hopes in the society of an only daughter: she knew that no earthly pleasure can compensate for the loss of that sweet sympathy which is the bond of union betwixt child and parent. Her regrets were infinite as they were evident;—and Mr. Robinson, in order to remove any obstacle which this consideration might throw in the way of our marriage, voluntarily proposed that she should reside with us. He represented me as too young and inexperienced to superintend domestic concerns; and, while he flattered my mother's *amour propre*, he rather requested her aid as a sacrifice to his interest than as an obligation conferred on her.

The bans were published three successive Sundays at St. Martin's church, and the day was fixed for our mar-

riage; — *the twelfth of April.* It was not till all preliminaries were adjusted that Mr. Robinson, with much apparent agitation, suggested the necessity of keeping our union a secret. I was astonished at the proposal: but two reasons were given for his having made it, both of which seemed plausible: the first was that Mr. Robinson had still three months to serve, before his articles to Messrs. Vernon and Elderton expired; and the second was, the hope which a young lady entertained of forming a matrimonial union with Mr. Robinson, as soon as that period should arrive. The latter reason alarmed me; but I was most solemnly assured that all the affection was cherished on the lady's part, that Mr. Robinson was particularly averse to the idea of such a marriage, and that as soon as

he should become of age his independence would place him beyond the controul of any person whatsoever.

I now proposed deferring our wedding day till that period. I pleaded that I thought myself too young to encounter the cares and important duties of domestic life: I shrunk from the idea of every thing clandestine, and anticipated a thousand ill consequences that might attend on a concealed marriage. My scruples only seemed to increase Mr. Robinson's impatience for that ceremony which should make me his for ever. He represented to my mother the disapprobation, which my father would not fail to evince, at my adopting a theatrical life, in preference to engaging in an honourable and prosperous connection. He so powerfully worked upon the credulity of my beloved pa-

rent, that she became a decided convert to his opinions. My youth, my person, he represented as the destined snares for my honour, on a public stage, where all the attractions of the mimic scene would combine to render me a fascinating object. He also persuaded her that my health would suffer by the fatigues and exertions of the profession; and that probably I might be induced to marry some man who would not approve of a *mother*'s forming a part in our *domestic establishment.*

These circumstances were repeatedly urged in favour of the union. Still I felt an almost instinctive repugnance at the thought of a clandestine marriage. My mother, whose parental fondness was ever watchful for my safety, now imagined that my objections proceeded from a fixed par-

tiality towards the libertine Captain ******; who, though he had not the temerity to present himself before my mother, persisted in writing to me, and in following me whenever I appeared in public. I never spoke to him after the story of his marriage was repeated to my mother: I never corresponded with him; but felt a decided and proud indignation whenever his name was mentioned in my presence.

My appearance on the stage had been put off from time to time, till Mr. Garrick became impatient, and desired my mother to allow of his fixing the night of important trial. It was now that Mr. Robinson and my mother united in persuading me to relinquish my project; and so perpetually, during three days, was I tormented on the subject,—so ridiculed for having permitted the bans to be

published, and afterwards hesitating to fulfil my contract, that I consented—and was married.

As soon as the day of my wedding was fixed, it was deemed necessary that a total revolution should take place in my external appearance. I had till that period worn the habit of a child; and the dress of a woman so suddenly assumed sat rather aukwardly upon me. Still, so juvenile was my appearance that, even two years after my union with Mr. Robinson, I was always accosted with the appellation of *Miss*, whenever I entered a shop, or was in company with strangers. My manners were no less childish than my appearance: only three months before I became a wife, I had dressed a doll; and, such was my dislike to the idea of a matrimonial alliance, that the only circumstance which

induced me to marry, was that of being still permitted to reside with my mother; and to live separated, at least for some time, from my husband.

My heart, even when I knelt at the altar, was as free from any tender impression as it had been at the moment of my birth. I knew not the sensation of any sentiment beyond that of esteem; love was still a stranger to my bosom. I had never, then, seen the being who was destined to inspire a thought which might influence my fancy, or excite an interest in my mind; and I well remember that, even while I was pronouncing the marriage vow, my fancy involuntarily wandered to that scene where I had hoped to support myself with *eclat* and reputation.

The ceremony was performed by Dr. Saunders, the venerable vicar of

St. Martin's, who, at the conclusion of the service, declared that he had never before performed the office for so young a bride. The clerk officiated as father; my mother, and the woman who opened the pews, were the only witnesses to the union. I was dressed in the habit of a quaker; a society to which, in early youth, I was particularly partial. From the church we repaired to the house of a female friend, where a splendid breakfast was waiting: I changed my dress to one of white muslin; a chip hat adorned with white ribbons, a white sarsnet scarf-cloak, and slippers of white satin embroidered with silver. I mention these trifling circumstances, because they lead to some others of more importance.

From the house of my mother's friend, we set out for the inn at Maid-

enhead-bridge; Mr. Robinson and myself in a phaeton, my mother in a post-chaise: we were also accompanied by a gentleman of the name of B****** a very intimate acquaintance and school-fellow of my husband; who was not apprized of our wedding, but who nevertheless considered Mr. Robinson as my avowed suitor.

On his first seeing me, he remarked that I was "*dressed like a bride.*" The observation overwhelmed me with confusion. During the day, I was more than pensive; I was melancholy: I considered all that had passed as a vision, and could scarcely persuade myself that the union, which I had permitted to be solemnized, was indissoluble. My mother frequently remarked my evident chagrin; and in the evening, while we strolled toge-

ther in the garden which was opposite the inn, I told her with a torrent of tears, the vouchers of my sincerity, that I was the most wretched of mortals! that I felt the most perfect esteem for Mr. Robinson; but that, according to my ideas of domestic happiness, there should be a warm and powerful union of soul, to which I was yet totally a stranger.

During my absence from town, a letter was written to Mr. Garrick, informing him that an advantageous marriage (for my mother considered Mr. Robinson as the legal heir to a handsome fortune, together with an estate in South Wales), had induced me to relinquish my theatrical prospects; and a few weeks after, meeting Mr. Garrick in the street, he congratulated me on my union, and express-

ed the warmest wishes for my future happiness.

The day after our marriage, Mr. Robinson proposed dining at Henley-upon-Thames. My mother would not venture in the phaeton, and Mr. B***** occupied the place which was declined by her. On taking his seat between Mr. Robinson and myself, he remarked, "Were you *married*, I should think of the holy anathema, Cursed is he that parteth *man* and *wife*." My countenance was suddenly suffused with the deepest scarlet: I cautiously concealed the effect which his remark had produced, and we proceeded on our journey.

Descending a steep hill betwixt Maidenhead-thicket and Henley, we met a drove of oxen. The comic opera of the Padloc was then in high celebrity, and our facetious little friend

a second time disconcerted me, by saying, in the words of Don Diego, "I don't like oxen, I wish they had been a flock of sheep!" I now began to discover the variety of unpleasant sensations which, even undesignedly, must arise from conversation, in the presence of those who were clandestinely married. I also trembled with apprehension, lest any thing disgraceful should attach itself to my fame, by being seen, under doubtful circumstances, in the society of Mr. Robinson.

On our return to London after ten days absence, a house was hired in Great Queen-street, Lincoln's-Inn-fields. It was a large old-fashioned mansion, and stood on the spot where the Freemason's Tavern has been since erected. This house was the property of a lady, an acquaintance of my

mother; the widow of Mr. Worlidge, an artist of considerable celebrity. It was handsomely furnished, and contained many valuable pictures by various masters. I resided with my mother: Mr. Robinson continued at the house of Messrs. Vernon and Elderton in Southampton-buildings.

The stated time of concealment elapsed, and still my husband was perpetually at chambers in Lincoln's Inn. Still he was evidently under the controul of his articles, and still desirous that our marriage should be kept a secret. My mother began to feel a considerable degree of inquietude upon the subject; particularly as she was informed that Mr. Robinson was not exactly in that state of expectation which he had represented. She found that he was already of age, and that he had still some months to serve of

his clerkship. She also heard that he was not the nephew and heir, but the illegitimate son of the man from whom he expected a handsome fortune: though he had an elder brother, now Commodore William Robinson, who was then in India reaping the fruits of industry under the patronage of Lord Clive.

It was now, for the first time, that my mother repented the influence she had used in promoting our union. She informed Mr. Robinson that she apprehended some gross deception on his part, and that she would no longer consent to our marriage being kept a secret. The reputation of a darling child, she alleged, was at stake; and though during a few weeks the world might have been kept in ignorance of my marriage, some circumstances that had transpired now rendered an

immediate disclosure absolutely necessary.

Mr. Robinson, finding my mother inexorable, resolved on setting out for Wales, in order to avow our marriage, and to present me to his *uncle*, for such he still obstinately denominated his father. My mother wished to avail herself of this opportunity to visit her friends at Bristol, and accordingly we set out on the journey. We passed through Oxford, visited the different colleges, proceeded to Blenheim, and made the *tour* a tour of pleasure; with the hope of soothing my mother's resentment, and exhilirating my spirits, which were now perpetually dejected. I cannot help mentioning that shortly after my marriage I formed an acquaintance with a young lady, whose mind was no less romantic than

my own; and, while Mr. Robinson was occupied at Chambers, we almost daily passed our morning hours in Westminster Abbey. It was to me a soothing and a gratifying scene of meditation.—I have often remained, in the gloomy chapels of that sublime fabric, till I became as it were an inhabitant of another world. The dim light of the Gothic windows, the vibration of my footsteps along the lofty aisles, the train of reflections that the scene inspired, were all suited to the temper of my soul: and the melancholy propensities of my earliest infancy seemed to revive with an instinctive energy, which rendered them the leading characteristics of my existence. Indeed the world has mistaken the character of my mind; I have ever been the reverse of volatile and

dissipated: I mean not to write my own eulogy; though, with the candid and sensitive mind, I shall, I trust, succeed in my vindication.

On our arrival at Bristol, Mr. Robinson thought it most advisable to proceed towards Tregunter, the seat of his *uncle*, alone; in order to prepare him for my cordial reception, or to avoid the mortification I should experience, should he refuse to sanction our union. Mr. Robinson left me a few guineas, and promised that his absence should be short and his affection increasing.

I had now been married nearly four months: and, though love was not the basis of my fidelity, honour, and a refined sense of feminine rectitude, attached me to the interest as well as to the person of my husband. I considered chastity as the brightest orna-

ment that could embellish the female mind; and I regulated my conduct to that tenor which has principle more than affection to strengthen its progress.

At Bristol, my mother experienced the most gratifying reception: all her former friends rejoiced to see her; I was invited daily to feasts of hospitality, and I found that fortune was, to common minds, a never-failing passport. Mr. Robinson was represented as a young man of considerable expectations, and his wife was consequently again received as the daughter of Mr. Darby. The house in which I first opened my eyes to this world of sorrow, the minster, its green, the school-house where I had passed my days, the tomb of my lost relatives in the church of St. Augustine, were all visited by me with a sweet and melancholy

interest. But the cathedral, the brass eagle in the middle aisle, under which, when an infant, I used to sit and join in the loud anthem, or chant the morning service, most sensibly attached me. I longed again to occupy my place beneath its expanding wings; and once I went, before the service began, to gratify my inclination.

Language cannot describe the sort of sensation which I felt, when I heard the well-known long-remembered organ swelling its loud peal through the Gothic structure. I hastened to the cloisters. The nursery windows were dim, and shattered; the house was sinking to decay. The mouldering walk was gloomy, and my spirits were depressed beyond description:—I stood alone, wrapt in meditation: "Here," said I, "did my infant feet pace to and fro'; here,

did I climb the long stone bench, and swiftly measure it, at the peril of my safety. On those dark and winding steps did I sit and listen to the full-toned organ, the loud anthem, and the bell which called the parishioners to prayer." I entered the cathedral once more; I read and re-read the monumental inscriptions: I paused upon the grave of Powel; I dropped a tear on the small square ground tablet which bore the name of Evelyn*. Ah! how little has the misjudging world known of what has passed in my mind, even in the apparently gayest moments of my existence! How much have I regretted that ever I was born, even when I have been surrounded with all that could gratify the vanity of woman!

Mr. Robinson on his arrival at

* A friend of our family.

Tregunter dispatched a letter, informing me that his *uncle* seemed disposed to act handsomely; but that he had only ventured to avow an intention to marry, fearful of abruptly declaring that he had been already some months a husband. Mr. Harris, for that was the name of my father-in-law, replied, that "he hoped the object of his choice was not *too young!*" At this question Mr. Robinson was somewhat disconcerted.—"A young wife," continued Mr. Harris, "cannot mend a man's fortune:—How old is the girl you have chosen?"

"She is nearly seventeen!"

I was then only fifteen and a few months.

"I hope she is not handsome," was the second observation. "You say she is not rich; and beauty, without

money, is but a dangerous sort of portion."

"Will you see her?"

"I have no objection," said Mr. Harris.

"She is now with her mother at Bristol; for," continued Mr. Robinson, with some hesitation, "*she is my wife.*"

Mr. Harris paused, and then replied, "Well! stay with me only a few days, and then you shall fetch her. If the thing is done it cannot be undone. She is a gentlewoman, you say, and I can have no reason to refuse seeing her."

The same letter, which contained this intelligence, also requested me to prepare for my journey; and desired me to write to a person whom Mr. Robinson named in London, and whom I had seen in his company, for

a sum of money, which would be necessary for our journey. This person was Mr. John King,---then a money-broker in Goodman's-Fields; but I was an entire stranger to the transaction which rendered him the temporary source of my husband's finances.

One or two letters passed on this subject, and I waited anxiously for my presentation at Tregunter. At length the period of Mr. Robinson's return arrived, and we set out together, while my mother remained with her friends at Bristol. Crossing the Old Passage to Chepstow in an open boat, a distance though not extended extremely perilous, we found the tide so strong, and the night so boisterous, that we were apprehensive of much danger. The rain poured, and the wind blew tempestuously. The boat was full of

passengers, and at one end of it were placed a drove of oxen. My terror was infinite :—I considered this storm as an ill omen; but little thought that, at future periods of my life, I should have cause to regret that *I had not perished!*

During our journey Mr. Robinson entreated me to overlook any thing harsh that might appear in the manners of his *uncle*; for he still denied that Mr. Harris was his father. But, above all things, he conjured me to conceal my real age, and to say that I was some years older than he knew me to be. To this proposal I readily consented; and I felt myself firm in courage at the moment when we came within sight of Tregunter.

Mr. Harris was then building the family mansion, and resided in a pretty little decorated cottage, which was

afterwards converted into domestic offices. We passed through a thick wood, the mountains at every brake meeting our eyes covered with thin clouds, and rising in a sublime altitude above the valley. A more romantic space of scenery never met the human eye!—I felt my mind inspired with a pensive melancholy, and was only awakened from my reverie by the post-boy stopping at the mansion of Tregunter.

Mr. Harris came out to receive me. I wore a dark claret-coloured riding-habit, with a white beaver hat and feathers. He embraced me with excessive cordiality, while Miss Robinson, my husband's sister, with cold formality led me into the house. I never shall forget her looks or her manner. Had her brother presented the most abject being to her, she

could not have taken my hand with a more frigid demeanour. Miss Robinson, though not more than twenty years of age, was Gothic in her appearance, and stiff in her deportment; she was of low stature, and clumsy, with a countenance peculiarly formed for the expression of sarcastic vulgarity—a short snub nose, turned up at the point, a head thrown back with an air of *hauteur*, a gaudy-coloured chintz gown, a thrice-bordered cap, with a profusion of ribbonds, and a countenance somewhat more ruddy than was consistent with even pure health, presented the personage whom I was to know as my future companion and kinswoman!

Mr. Harris looked like a venerable HAWTHORN; a brown fustian coat, a scarlet waistcoat edged with narrow gold, a pair of woollen spatter-dashes,

and a gold laced hat, formed the dress he generally wore. He always rode a small Welch poney; and was seldom in the house, excepting at meal-time, from sun rise to the close of evening.

There was yet another personage in the domestic establishment, who was by Mr. Harris regarded as of no small importance: this was a venerable house-keeper, of the name of Mary Edwards. Mrs. Molly was the female Mentor of the family; she dined at the table with Mr. Harris; she was the governess of the domestic department: and a more overbearing vindictive spirit never inhabited the heart of mortal, than that which pervaded the soul of the ill-natured Mrs. Molly.

It may easily be conjectured that my time passed heavily in this uninteresting circle. I was condemned either to drink ale with "the 'Squire,"

for Mr. Harris was only spoken of by that title, or to visit the methodistical seminary which Lady Huntingdon had established at Trevecca, another mansion-house on the estate of Mr. Harris. Miss Robinson was of this sect; and though Mr. Harris was not a disciple of the Huntingdonian School, he was a constant church visitor on every Sunday. His zeal was indefatigable; and he would frequently fine the rustics, (for he was a justice of the peace, and had been sheriff of the county,) when he heard them swear, though every third sentence he uttered was attended by an oath that made his hearers shudder.

I soon became a considerable favourite with "the *Squire*;" but I did not find any yielding qualities about the hearts of Miss Betsy or Mrs. Molly. They observed me with jealous eyes; they considered me as an interloper,

whose manners attracted Mr. Harris's esteem, and who was likely to diminish their divided influence in the family. I found them daily growing weary of my society; I perceived their side-long glances when I was complimented by the visiting neighbours on my good looks, or taste in the choice of my dresses. Miss Robinson rode on horseback in a camlet safe-guard, with a high-crowned bonnet. I wore a fashionable habit, and looked like something human. Envy at length assumed the form of insolence, and I was taunted perpetually on the folly of appearing like a woman of fortune; — that a lawyer's wife had no right to dress like a duchess; and that, though I might be very accomplished, a good housewife had no occasion for harpsichords and books; they belonged to women who

brought wherewithall to support them. Such was the language of vulgar illiberal natures! yet for three weeks I endured it patiently.

Knowing that Mr. Harris was disposed to think favourably of me—that he even declared he should "have liked me for his wife, had I not *married Tom*," though he was then between sixty and seventy years of age, I thought it most prudent to depart, lest through the machinations of Miss Betsy and Mrs. Molly I should lose the share I had gained in his affections. My mother was still at Bristol; and the morning of our departure being arrived, to my infinite astonishment, Mr. Harris proposed accompanying us thither. It was in vain that Molly and Miss interfered to prevent him; he swore that he would see me safe across the Chan-

nel, whatever might be the consequence of his journey. We set out together.

On our arrival at Bristol, Mr. Harris was presented to my mother, and by her introduced to many respectable friends. He was consequently invited to several dinner parties. I was his idol; he would dance with me; when he had taken the evening draught he would sing with me; and I was to him the most delightful of beings. Many embellishments for Tregunter-house were submitted to my taste and choice; and I remember, on his giving orders for the marble chimney-pieces, he said, "Choose them as you like them, Mrs Robinson, for they are all for you and Tom when I am no more." Indeed he frequently assured me, while I was at Tregunter, that the estate should be my husband's.

After passing many days at Bristol, Mr. Harris returned to Wales, and our party set out for London. Mr. Robinson's mind was easy, and his hopes were confirmed by the kindness of his uncle: he now considered himself as the most happy of mortals. We removed from Great Queen-street, to a house, No. 13, in Hatton-garden, which had been recently built. Mr. Robinson hired it, and furnished it with peculiar elegance. I frequently inquired into the extent of his finances, and he as often assured me that they were in every respect competent to his expences. In addition to our domestic establishment, Mr. Robinson purchased a handsome phæton, with saddle horses for his own use: and I now made my *début*, though scarcely emerged beyond the boundaries of childhood, in

the broad hemisphere of fashionable folly.

A new face, a young person dressed with peculiar but simple elegance, was sure to attract attention at places of public entertainment. The first time I went to Ranelagh my habit was so singularly plain, and quaker-like, that all eyes were fixed upon me. I wore a gown of light brown lustring with close round cuffs: (it was then the fashion to wear long ruffles); my hair was without powder, and my head adorned with a plain round cap and a white chip hat, without any ornaments whatever.

The second place of polite entertainment, to which Mr. Robinson accompanied me, was the Pantheon Concert, then the most fashionable assemblage of the gay and the distinguished. At this plaee it was custo-

mary to appear much dressed; large hoops and high feathers were universally worn. My habit was composed of pale pink satin, trimmed with broad sable: my dear mother presented me a suit of rich and valuable point lace, which she had received from my father as a birth-day gift; and I was at least some hours employed in decorating my person for this new sphere of fascination: I say some hours, because my *shape* at that period required some arrangement, owing to the visible *increase* of my domestic solicitudes.

As soon as I entered the Pantheon Rotunda, I never shall forget the impression which my mind received: the splendour of the scene, the dome illuminated with variegated lamps, the music, and the beauty of the women, seemed to present a circle of enchantment. I recollect that the most lovely

of fair forms met my eyes in that of Lady Almeria Carpenter. The countenance which most pleased me was that of the late Mrs. Baddeley. The first Countess of Tyrconnel also appeared with considerable *éclat*. But the buzz of the room, the unceasing murmur of admiration, attended the Marchioness Townshend: I took my seat on a sofa nearly opposite to that on which she was sitting, and I observed two persons, evidently men of fashion, speaking to her; till one of them, looking towards me, with an audible voice inquired of the other "Who is she?"

Their fixed stare disconcerted me. I rose, and, leaning on my husband's arm, again mingled in the brilliant circle. The inquirers followed us, stopping several friends, as we walked round the circle, and repeatedly demanding of them, "Who is that young

lady in the pink dress trimmed with sable?"—My manner and confusion plainly evinced that I was not accustomed to the gaze of impertinent high breeding. I felt uneasy, and proposed returning home, when I perceived that our two followers were joined by a third, who, on looking at me, said, "I think I know her." It was the late Earl of Northington.

We had now to pass the group in order to quit the rotunda. Lord Northington, leaving his companions, approached me. "Miss Darby, or I am mistaken," said he, with a bow of marked civility. I replied that my name was now changed to that of Robinson: and, to prevent any awkward embarrassment, presented my husband, on whose arm I was still leaning. Lord Northington continued to walk round the Pantheon with us,

made many inquiries after my father, complimented me on the improvement of my person, and hoped that he should be permitted to pay his respects to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson."

We now entered the tea-room: there was not a seat vacant: I was considerably fatigued, and somewhat faint with the heat of the rotunda. I quitted the tea-room, and seated myself on a sofa near the door. In a few minutes Lord Northington brought me a cup of tea, for Mr. Robinson did not like to leave me alone; and at the same time presented his two inquisitive friends, Lord Lyttelton and Captain Ayscough.

I now proposed departing. Mr. Robinson accompanied me to the vestibule; and, while he was seeking the carriage, Lord Lyttelton offered

his services. I had never till that evening heard his name; but there was an easy effrontery in his address that completely disgusted, while his determined gaze distressed and embarrassed me; and I felt inexpressible satisfaction when Mr. Robinson returned to tell me that the carriage was ready.

On the following morning Lords Northington, Lyttelton, and Colonel Ayscough, made their visits of ceremony. Mr. Robinson was not at home, but I received them, though not without some embarrassment. I was yet a child, and wholly unacquainted with the manners of the world. Yet, young as I was, I became the traveller of its mazy and perilous paths;—at an age when girls are generally at school, or indeed scarcely

emancipated from the nursery, I was presented in society as a wife,—and very nearly as a mother.

Lord Lyttelton, who was perhaps the most accomplished libertine that any age or country has produced, with considerable artifice inquired after Mr. Robinson, professed his earnest desire to cultivate his acquaintance, and, on the following day, sent him a card of invitation. Lyttelton was an adept in the artifices of fashionable intrigue: he plainly perceived that both Mr. Robinson and myself were uninitiated in its mysteries: he knew that, to undermine a wife's honour, he must become master of the husband's confidence; and Mr. Robinson was too much pleased, with the society of a man whose wit was only equalled by his profligacy, to shrink from such an association.

Fortunately for me, Lord Lyttelton was uniformly my aversion. His manners were overbearingly insolent, his language licentious, and his person slovenly even to a degree that was disgusting. Mr. Robinson was in every respect the very reverse of his companion: he was unassuming, neat, and delicate in his conversation. I had not a wish to descend from the propriety of wedded life; and I abhorred, decidedly abhorred, the acquaintance with Lord Lyttelton.

In the course of a few days his lordship presented me the works of Miss Aikin, now Mrs. Barbauld: I read them with rapture: I thought them the most beautiful Poems I had ever seen; and considered the woman, who could invent such poetry, as the most to be envied of human creatures. Lord Lyttelton had

some taste for poetical compositions, and wrote verses with considerable facility.

On the following Monday, I again visited the Pantheon. My dress was then white and silver. Again I was followed with attention. Lord Lyttelton was my *cavaliere servante* that evening; though, as usual, his chief attention was paid to Mr. Robinson. During the concert, he presented the Count de Belgioso, the Imperial Ambassador, one of the most accomplished foreigners I ever remember to have met. Lord Valentia was also introduced; but, as his Lordship had recently made some *éclat* by his attentions to the celebrated Mrs. Elliot, I rather avoided than wished to cultivate his acquaintance.

Mr. Robinson's intercourse with the world was now rapidly augmenting.

Every day was productive of some new association. Lord Lyttelton presented many of his friends: among others Captain O'Byrne, and Mr. William Brereton of Drury-lane theatre. In the course of a short time we also became acquainted with Sir Francis Molyneux, Mr. Alderman Sayer, and the late unfortunate George Robert Fitzgerald. Lord Northington was also a constant visitor, and frequently rallied me on what he thought my striking likeness to his family.

Among my female friends, those, for whom I entertained the strongest esteem, were Lady Yea, the wife of Sir William Yea, and the sister of Sir John Trevellyan;—she was a lovely and accomplished woman; and Mrs. Parry, the wife of the Reverend Doctor Parry, and the author of Eden Vale, a novel; who was also one of my most

favourite acquaintances. Mrs. Parry was a woman of considerable talents, a wit, and of remarkably pleasing manners.

Of those who frequented our house, Lord Lyttelton was most decidedly my abhorrence: I knew that he frequently led my husband from the paths of domestic confidence to the haunts of profligate debasement. Towards me his Lordship affected great indifference: he has even in my presence declared that no woman under thirty years of age was worth admiring; that even the antiquity of forty was far preferable to the insipidity of sixteen; and he generally concluded his observations, by hoping he had not made "the *pretty child* angry."

I soon discovered that his intercourse with Lord Lyttelton produced a very considerable change in

Mr. Robinson's domestic deportment. They were constantly together, and the neglect which I experienced began to alarm me. I dedicated all my leisure hours to poetry: I wrote verses of all sorts; and Mr. Robinson having mentioned that I had purposed appearing on the stage previous to my marriage, in the character of Cordelia, Lord Lyttelton facetiously christened me the Poetess Corry.

It was with extreme regret, and frequently with uncontrolable indignation, that I endured the neglect of my husband and the tauntings of the profligate Lyttelton—"The child," for so he generally called me, was deserted for the society of the most libertine men and the most abandoned women. Mr. Robinson became not only careless of his wife, but of his pecuniary concerns; while I was kept in total

ignorance as to the resources which supplied his increasing expences.

Among my other friends, Lady Yea frequently inquired by what means my husband supported his household disbursements. Our table was elegantly, though not profusely, served. Mr. Robinson seldom attended to his profession; and I was too young, as well as too inexperienced, to look after family affairs. My younger brother George, whom upon my marriage Mr. Robinson and myself adopted as our own, now finding his health impaired, my mother attended him to Bristol; so that I had no friend to advise me, who felt any real interest in my welfare. Dress, parties, adulation, occupied all my hours. Mr. Robinson's easy temper was influenced by the counsel of his friend Lyttelton, and he every hour sunk more deeply in the gulph of dissipation.

Among the most dangerous of my husband's associates was George Robert Fitzgerald. His manners towards women were interesting and attentive. He perceived the neglect with which I was treated by Mr. Robinson, and the pernicious influence which Lord Lyttelton had acquired over his mind: he professed to feel the warmest interest in my welfare, lamented the destiny which had befallen me, in being wedded to a man incapable of estimating my value, and at last confessed *himself* my most ardent and devoted admirer. I shuddered at the declaration, for amidst all the allurements of splendid folly, my mind, the purity of my virtue, was still uncontaminated.

I repulsed the dangerous advances of this accomplished person; but I did not the less feel the humiliation to which a husband's indifference had

exposed me. God can bear witness to the purity of my soul; even surrounded by temptations, and mortified by neglect. Whenever I ventured to inquire into pecuniary resources, Mr. Robinson silenced me by saying that he was independent: added to this assurance, Lord Lyttelton repeatedly promised that, through his courtly interest, he would very shortly obtain for my husband some honourable and lucrative situation.

I confess that I reposed but little confidence in the promises of such a man, though my husband believed them inviolable. Frequent parties were made at his Lordship's house in Hill-street, and many invitations pressed for a visit to his seat at Hagley. These I peremptorily refused; till the noble hypocrite became convinced of

my aversion, and adopted a new mode of pursuing his machinations.

One forenoon Lord Lyttelton called in Hatton-Garden, as was almost his daily custom; and, on finding that Mr. Robinson was not at home, requested to speak with me on business of importance. I found him seemingly much distressed. He informed me that he had a secret to communicate of considerable moment both to my interest and happiness. I started: "Nothing, I trust in heaven, has befallen my husband!" said I with a voice scarcely articulate. Lord Lyttelton hesitated. "How little does that husband deserve the solicitude of such a wife!" said he; "but," continued his Lordship, "I fear that I have in some degree aided in alienating his conjugal affections. I could not bear to

see such youth, such merit, so sacrificed"——"Speak briefly, my Lord," said I.—"Then," replied Lord Lyttelton, "I must inform you that your husband is the most false and undeserving of that name! He has formed a connection with a woman of abandoned character; he lavishes on her those means of subsistence which you will shortly stand in need of."

"I do not believe it," said I, indignantly.—"Then you shall be convinced," answered his Lordship—"but remember, if you betray me, your true and zealous friend, I must fight your husband; for he never will forgive my having discovered his infidelity."

"It cannot be true," said I. "You have been misinformed."

"Then it has been by the woman who usurps your place in the affections of your husband," replied Lord Lyt-

telton: "from her I received the information: her name is Harriet Wilmot: she resides in Soho: your husband daily visits her."—I thought I should have fainted: but a torrent of tears recalled the ebbing current of my heart, and I grew proud in fortitude, though humbled in self-love.

"Now," said Lord Lyttelton, "if you are a woman of spirit, you will be *revenged!*" I shrunk with horror, and would have quitted the room. "Hear me," said he, "You cannot be a stranger to my motives for thus cultivating the friendship of your husband: my fortune is at your disposal. Robinson is a ruined man; his debts are considerable, and nothing but destruction can await you. Leave him! Command my powers to serve you."

I would hear no more — broke

from him, and rushed out of the apartments. My sensations, my sufferings, were undescribable.

I immediately took an hackney coach, and proceeded to Prince's-street, Soho;—Lord Lyttelton having given me the address of my rival. Language cannot describe what I suffered, till I arrived at the lodgings of Miss Wilmot. The coachman knocked; a dirty servant girl opened the door. Her mistress was not at home; I quitted the coach and ascended to the drawing room, where the servant left me, after informing me that Miss Wilmot would return in a very short time. I was now left alone.

I opened the chamber-door which led from the drawing room: a new white lustring sacque and petticoat lay on the bed. While I was examining the room, a loud knocking at

the street door alarmed me. I re-entered the front apartment, and waited with a palpitating bosom till the being, whose triumph had awakened both my pride and my resentment, appeared before me.

She was a handsome woman, though evidently some years older than myself. She wore a dress of printed Irish muslin, with a black gauze cloak and a chip hat trimmed with pale lilac ribbons; she was tall, and had a very pleasing countenance: her manner was timid and confused; her lips were as pale as ashes. I commiserated her distress, desired her not to be alarmed, and we took our seats with increased composure.

"I came to enquire whether or not you are acquainted with a Mr. Robinson?" said I.

"I am," replied Miss Wilmot:

"He visits me frequently." She drew off her glove as she spoke; and, passing her hand over her eyes, I observed on her finger a ring, which I knew to have been my husband's.

"I have nothing more to say," added I, "but to request that you will favour me with Mr. Robinson's address; I have something which I wish to convey to him." She smiled, and cast her eyes over my figure: my dress was a morning *dishabille* of India muslin, with a bonnet of straw, and a white lawn cloak bordered with lace. "You are Mr. Robinson's wife," said she, with a trembling voice: "I am sure you are; and probably this ring was yours; pray receive it—"

I declined taking the ring. She continued: "Had I known that Mr. Robinson was the husband of such a woman—"

I rose to leave her.—She added: "I never will see him more—unworthy man— I never will again receive him." I could make no reply; but rose and departed.

On my return to Hatton-garden, I found my Husband waiting dinner. I concealed my chagrin. We had made a party that evening to Drury-lane theatre, and from thence to a select concert at the Count de Belgioso's in Portman-square. Lord Lyttelton was to join us at both places. We went to the play; but my agitation had produced such a violent headache that I was obliged to send an apology for not keeping our engagement at the imperial ambassador's.

On the following morning I spoke to Mr. Robinson, respecting Miss Wilmot. He did not deny that he knew such a person; and that he had visited her; but he threw all the blame

of his indiscretion on Lord Lyttelton. He requested to know who had informed me of his conduct. I refused to tell: and he had too high an opinion of his false associate to suspect him of such treachery.

At one of Mrs. Parry's card parties I met Mrs. Abington. I thought her the most lively and bewitching woman I had ever seen: her manners were fascinating; and the peculiar tastefulness of her dress excited universal admiration. My imagination again wandered to the stage; and I thought the heroine of the scenic art was of all human creatures the most to be envied.

About this period I observed that Mr. Robinson had frequent visitors of the Jewish tribe; that he was often closetted with them, and that some secret negotiation was going forward,

to which I was a total stranger. Among others, Mr. King was a constant visitor; indeed he had often been with my husband, on private business, ever since the period of our mariage. I questioned Mr. Robinson upon the subject of these strange and repeated interviews. He assured me that the persons I had seen came merely upon law business, and that, in his profession, it was necessary to be civil to all ranks of people. Whenever I urged a further explanation, he assumed a tone of displeasure; and requested me not to meddle with his professional occupations: I desisted; and the parlour of our house was almost as much frequented by Jews as though it had been their synagogue.

Mr. Robinson's mornings were devoted to his bearded friends; and his evenings to his fashionable associates;

but my hours were all dedicated to sorrow; for I now heard that my husband, even at the period of his marriage, had an attachment which he had not broken; and that his infidelities were as public as the ruin of his finances was inevitable. I remonstrated—I was almost frantic. My distress was useless; my wishes to retrench our expences were ineffectual. Mr. Robinson had, *previous to our union*, deeply involved himself in a bond debt of considerable magnitude; and he had, from time to time, borrowed money on annuity—one sum to discharge the other, till every plan of liquidation appeared impracticable. During all this time, my mother was at Bristol.

Lord Lyttelton, finding every plan of seduction fail, now rested his only hope of subduing my honour in the

certainty of my husband's ruin. He therefore took every step, and embraced every opportunity to involve him more deeply in calamity. Parties were made to Richmond and Salt-hill, to Ascot-heath and Epsom races; in all of which Mr. Robinson bore his share of expence, with the addition of post-horses. Whenever he seemed to shrink from his augmenting indiscretion, Lord Lyttelton assured him that, through his interest, an appointment of honourable and pecuniary importance should be obtained: though I embraced every opportunity to assure his Lordship that no consideration upon earth should ever make me the victim of his artifice.

Mr. Fitzgerald still paid me unremitting attention. His manner *towards women* were beautifully in-

teresting. He frequently cautioned me against the libertine Lyttelton, and as frequently lamented the misguided confidence which Mr. Robinson reposed in him.—Lord Lyttelton's shameless conduct towards an amiable wife from whom he was separated, and his cruel neglect of a lady of the name of Dawson, who had long been attached to him, marked the unworthiness of his character: he was the very last man in the world for whom I ever could have entertained the smallest partiality: he was to me the most hateful of existing beings. Probably these pages will be read when the hand that writes them moulders in the grave; when that God, who judges all hearts, will know how innocent I was of the smallest conjugal infidelity. I make this solemn asseveration, because there have

been malevolent spirits who, in the plenitude of their calumny, have slandered me, by suspecting my fidelity even at this early period of my existence. These pages are the pages of truth, unadorned by romance, and unembellished by the graces of phraseology; and I know too well that I have been sufficiently the victim of events, to become the tacit acquiescer where I have been grossly misrepresented. Alas! of all created beings, I have been the most severely subjugated by circumstances more than byinclination.

About this time a party was one evening made to Vauxhall. Mr. Fitzgerald was the person who proposed it, and it consisted of six or eight persons. The night was warm, and the gardens crowded; we supped in the circle which has the statue of Handel

in its centre. The hour growing late, or rather early in the morning, our company dispersed, and no one remained excepting Mr. Robinson, Mr. Fitzgerald, and myself. Suddenly a noise was heard near the orchestra; a crowd had assembled, and two gentlemen were quarrelling furiously. Mr. R. and Fitzgerald ran out of the box. I rose to follow them, but they were lost in the throng, and I thought it most prudent to resume my place, which I had just quitted, as the only certain way of their finding me in safety. In a moment, Fitzgerald returned: "Robinson," said he, "is gone to seek you at the entrance-door; he thought you had quited the box." "I did for a moment," said I, "but I was fearful of losing him in the crowd, and therefore returned."

"Let me conduct you to the door;

we shall certainly find him there," replied Mr. Fitzgerald: "I know that he will be uneasy."—I took his arm, and we ran hastily towards the entrance door on the Vauxhall road.

Mr. Robinson was not there: we proceeded to look for our carriage; it stood at some distance. I was alarmed and bewildered. Mr. Fitzgerald hurried me along.—" Don't be uneasy, we shall certainly find him," said he, "for I left him here not five minutes ago." As he spoke he stopped abruptly: a servant opened a chaise door; there were four horses harnessed to it: and, by the light of the lamps on the side of the foot-path, I plainly perceived a pistol in the pocket of the door which was open. I drew back. Mr. Fitzgerald placed his arm round my waist, and endeavoured to lift me up the step of the chaise; the

servant watching at a little distance. I resisted, and inquired what he meant by such conduct; his hand trembled excessively, while he said in a low voice: "Robinson can but fight me." I was terrified beyond all description:—I made him loose his hold—and ran towards the entrance door. Mr. Fitzgerald now perceived Mr. Robinson. "Here he comes!" exclaimed he with an easy *nonchalence*. "We had found the wrong carriage, Mr. Robinson: we have been looking after you, and Mrs. Robinson is alarmed beyond expression."—

"I am indeed!" said I. Mr. Robinson now took my hand. We stepped into the coach, and Mr. Fitzgerald followed. As we proceeded towards Hatton-garden, the sky incessantly flashed lightning. I was terrified by the combination of events; and I was

in a situation which rendered any alarm peculiarly dangerous, for I was several months advanced in that state, which afterwards terminated by presenting to me my only child, my *darling* MARIA.

I had often heard of Mr. Fitzgerald's propensity to duelling—I recollected my own delicate situation—I valued my husband's safety, I therefore did not mention the adventure of the evening: particularly as Mr. Fitzgerald observed, in our way to Hatton-garden, that he had "nearly made a strange mistake, and taken possession of another person's carriage." This remark appeared so plausible that nothing further was said upon the subject.

From that evening I was particularly cautious in avoiding Fitzgerald. He was too daring, and too fascinating a being, to be allowed the small-

est marks of confidence. Whenever he called, I was denied to him: and, at length, perceiving the impracticability of his plan, he desisted, and seldom called excepting to leave his name, as a visitor of ceremony.

I do not recount these events, these plans for my enthralment, with a view to convey any thing like personal vanity; for I can with truth affirm that I never thought myself entitled to admiration that could endanger my security, or tempt the libertine to undermine my husband's honour. But I attribute the snares that were laid for me to three causes. The first, my youth and inexperience, my girlish appearance and simplicity of manners: next, the expensive style in which Mr. Robinson lived; though he was not known as a man of independent fortune: and, thirdly, the evident ne-

glect which I experienced from my husband, whom Lord Lyttelton's society had marked as a man of universal gallantry.

I was now known, by name, at every public place in and near the metropolis: our circle of acquaintances enlarged daily; my friend, Lady Yea, was my constant companion. Mr. Robinson became desperate, froma thorough conviction that no effort of economy, or professional labour, could arrange his shattered finances: the large debt which he owed, *previous to his marriage with me*, having laid the foundation for every succeeding embarrassment.

The moment now approached when the arcanum was to be developed; and an execution on Mr. Robinson's effects, at the suit of an annuitant, decided the doubts and fears which

had long afflicted me. I was in a great degree prepared for this event, by the evident inquietude of my husband's mind, and his frequent interviews with persons of a mysterious description. Indeed this crisis seemed rather consolatory than appalling; for I hoped and trusted that the time was now arrived when reason would take place of folly, and experience point out those thorns which strew the pleasurable paths of dissipation.

At this period, had Mr. Harris generously assisted his son, *I am fully and confidently persuaded that he would have pursued a discreet and regular line of conduct.* His *first* involvement was the basis of all his misfortunes: the impossibility of liquidating that debt, (the motive for which it was contracted is to this hour unknown to

me,) rendered him desperate. Indeed how could a young man, well educated*, subsist in such a metropolis without some provision? Mr. Harris was a man of fortune; and he ought to have known that necessity is the most dangerous associate of youth; and that folly may be reclaimed by kindness, but seldom fails to be darkened into vice by the severity of unpitying natures.

From Hatton-garden we removed to a house, which was lent to us by a friend at Finchley. Here I hoped at least to remain tranquil till the perilous moment was past, which was to render me a mother. I here devoted my time to making my infant's little wardrobe: my finest muslin dresses I converted into frocks and robes; with

* Mr. Robinson was educated at Harrow, and was a contemporary of Mr. Sheridan.

my lace I fondly trimmed them. It was a sweetly pleasing task, and I often smiled when I reflected that, only three years before this period, I had dressed a waxen doll, nearly as large as a new born infant.

Mr. Robinson had much business to transact in London, and I was almost perpetually alone at Finchley. Of our domeftic establishment there was only one, who did not desert us, and he was—a Negro!—one of that despised degraded race, who wear the colour on their features which too often characterises the hearts of their fair and unfeeling oppressors. I have found, during my journey through life, that the two male domestics who were most attached to my interest, and most faithful to my fortunes, were both *Negroes!*

My mother now returned from

Bristol, and I had the consolation of her society. I divided my time betwixt reading, writing, and making a little wardrobe for my expected darling. I little regretted the busy scenes of life; I sighed not for public attention. I felt by this change of situation as though a weighty load were taken from my heart, and solaced my mind in the idea that the worst had happened which could befall us. Gracious Heaven! How should I have shuddered, had I then contemplated the dark perspective of my destiny!

Mr. Robinson went almost daily to London, and sometimes my brother George, who was still a boy, accompanied him upon a little poney.—One day, after returning from one of their rides, my brother informed me that he had been with Mr. Robinson to

Marylebone; and that he had waited and held Mr. Robinson's horse, while he made a morning visit. I had then no acquaintance that resided at Marylebone; I questioned my brother as to the place, and he persisted in his original story. "But, added he, "if you say any thing about it to Mr. Robinson, I will never tell you where we go in future." I promised not to mention what he had said, and my mind was deeply engaged in a variety of conjectures.

A few days after, Mr. Robinson made another visit; and my brother was introduced to the lady*. From the manner and conversation of both parties, even a youth scarcely in his teens could draw conclusions of no favourable nature. By the side of the chimney hung my watch, which I

* This lady's name was Pye.

had supposed lost in the general wreck of our property: It was enamelled with musical trophies, and very remarkable for a steel chain of singular beauty. The moment my brother described it, my suspicions were confirmed; and Mr. Robinson did not even attempt to deny his infidelity.

Mr. Robinson, finding his creditors inexorable, and fearing that he might endanger his personal liberty by remaining near London, informed me that I must, in a few days, accompany him to Tregunter. I felt a severe pang in the idea of quitting my adored mother at a moment when I should stand so much in need of a parent's attentions: my agony was extreme: I fancied that I never should behold her more; that the harshness and humiliating taunts of my husband's

kindred would send me prematurely to the grave; that my infant would be left among strangers; and that my mother would scarcely have fortitude sufficient to survive me. Then I anticipated the inconvenience of so long a journey, for Tregunter House was within a few miles of Brecon. I dreaded to encounter the scornful vulgarity and the keen glances of Miss Betsey and Mrs. Molly. I considered all these things—with horror; but the propriety of wedded life commanded the sacrifice, and I readily consented to make it.

With tender regret, with agonizing presentiments, I took leave of my mother and my brother. Such a parting would but mock the powers of language! My delicate situation, my youth, my affection for the best of mothers—all conspired to augment

my sorrow :—but a husband's repose a husband's *liberty*, were at stake; and my CREATOR can bear witness that had I been blessed with that fidelity and affection which I deserved, my heart was disposed to the observance of every duty, every claim which would have embellished domestic propriety.

We set out for Tregunter. On our arrival there, I instantly perceived that our misfortunes had outstripped our speed. Miss Robinson scarcely bade us welcome; and Molly was peevish, even to insulting displeasure.

Mr. Harris was from home when we arrived, but he returned shortly after. His greeting was harsh and unfeeling. "Well! So you have escaped from a prison, and now you are come here to do penance for your follies? Well! and what do you

want?" I could not reply. I entered the house, and instantly hastened to my old chamber, where my tears gave relief to that heart which was almost bursting with agony.

Still Mr. Robinson conjured me to bear his *uncle*'s wayward temper patiently. I did; though every day I was taunted with idle and inhuman questions: such as, "How long do you think that I will support you? What is to become of you in a prison? What business have beggars to marry?" With many others, equally feeling and high-minded!

The mansion of Tregunter presented but few sources of amusement for the female mind. Mr. Harris had acquired a considerable fortune in trade; and, however the art of accumulating wealth had been successfully

practised, the finer pursuits of mental powers had been totally neglected. Books were unknown at Tregunter, excepting a few Magazines or periodical publications, which at different periods Miss Robinson borrowed from her juvenile neighbours. There was however an old spinnet in one of the parlours. Music had been one of my early delights, and I sometimes vainly endeavoured to draw a kind of jingling harmony from this time-shaken and neglected instrument. These attempts however frequently subjected me to insult. "I had better think of getting my bread: women of no fortune had no right to follow the pursuits of fine ladies. Tom had better married a good tradesman's daughter than the child of a ruined merchant, who was not capable of

earning a living. Such were the remarks of my amiable and enlightened father-in-law!"

One day, I particularly remember, Mr. Harris had invited a large party to dinner. John and Charles Morgan, Esqrs. members of parliament, with an old clergyman of the name of Jones, and several others were present. I was then within a fortnight of my perilous moment. One of the company expressed his satisfaction that I was come to give Tregunter a little stranger; and turning to Mr. Harris, added, "you have juſt finished your house in time for a nursery."

"No, no," replied Mr. Harris, laughing, "they came here because *priſon doors* were open to receive them." I felt my face redden to scarlet: every person present seemed to sympathize in my chagrin, and I was

near sinking under the table with confusion. Mr. Robinson's indignation was evident; but it was restrained by duty as well as by necessity.

The manor-house was not yet finished; and a few days after our arrival Mr. Harris informed me that he had no accommodations for my approaching confinement. Where was I to go? was the next question. After many family consultations, it was decided that I should remove to Trevecca-house, about a mile and a half distant, and there give to this miserable world my first born darling.

I removed to Trevecca: it was a spacious mansion at the foot of a stupendous mountain, which, from its form, was called the Sugar-loaf. A part of the building was converted into a flannel manufactory, and the inhabitants were of the Huntingdo-

nian school. Here I enjoyed the sweet repose of solitude: here I wandered about woods entangled by the wild luxuriance of nature, or roved upon the mountain's side, while the blue vapours floated round its summit. O, God of Nature! Sovereign of the universe of wonders! in those interesting moments how fervently did I adore thee!

How often have I set at my little parlour window and watched the pale moonbeams darting amidst the sombre and venerable yew trees that shed their solemn shade over the little garden. How often have I strolled down the woody paths, spangled with the dew of morning, and shaken off the briery branches that hung about me. How tranquil did I feel escaped from kindred tyranny, and how little did I regret the busy scenes of fashionable

folly. Unquestionably, the Creator formed me with a strong propensity to adore the sublime and beautiful of his works! But it has never been my lot to meet with an associating mind, a congenial spirit, who could (as it were abstracted from the world,) find an universe in the sacred intercourse of soul, the sublime union of sensibility.

At Trevecca-house I was tranquil, if not perfectly happy. I there avoided the low taunts of uncultivated natures, the insolent vulgarity of pride, and the overbearing triumphs of a family, *whose loftiest branch* was as inferior to *my stock* as the *small weed* is beneath the *tallest tree* that overshades it. I had formed an union with a family who had neither sentiment nor sensibility: I was doomed to bear the society of ignorance and pride: I was treated as though I had

been the most abject of beings, even at a time when my conscious spirit soared as far above their powers to wound it, as the mountain towered over the white battlements of my then solitary habitation.

After my removal to Trevecca, I seldom saw Miss Robinson or Mrs. Molly: Mr. Harris never called on me; though I was not more than a mile and a half from Tregunter. At length the expected, though to me most perilous moment, arrived, which awoke a new and tender interest in my bosom, which presented to my fondly beating heart my child,—my Maria. I cannot describe the sensations of my soul at the moment when I pressed the little darling to my bosom, my maternal bosom: when I kissed its hands, its cheeks, its forehead, as it nestled closely to my heart, and seemed

to claim that affection which has never failed to warm it. She was the most beautiful of infants! I thought myself the happiest of mothers: her first smile appeared like something celestial,—something ordained to irradiate my dark and dreary prospect of existence.

Two days after my child was presented to this world of sorrow, my nurse, Mrs. Jones, a most excellent woman, was earnestly desired by the people of the manufactory to bring the infant among them: they wished to see the "young 'squire's baby, the little *heiress* to Tregunter." It was in vain that I dreaded the consequences of the visit, for it was in the month of October; but Mrs. Jones assured me that infants in that part of the world were very frequently carried into the open air on the day of their birth: she also hinted that my

refusal would hurt the feelings of the honest people, and wear the semblance of pride more than of maternal tenderness. This idea decided my acquiescence; and my little darling, enveloped in the manufacture of her own romantic birth-place, made her first visit to her kind but unsophisticated countrywomen.

No sooner did Mrs. Jones enter the circle than she was surrounded by the gazing throng. The infant was dressed with peculiar neatness, and nothing mortal could appear more lovely. A thousand and a thousand blessings were heaped upon the "*heiress* of Tregunter," for so they *fancifully* called her: a thousand times did they declare that the baby was the very image of her father. Mrs. Jones returned to me: every word she uttered soothed my heart: a

sweet and grateful glow, for the first time, bespoke the undescribable gratification which a fond parent feels in hearing the praises of a beloved offspring. Yet this little absence appeared an age; a variety of fears presented dangers in a variety of shapes; and the object of all my care, of all my affection, was now pressed closer to my heart than ever.

Amidst these sweet and never-to-be-forgotten sensations, Mr. Harris entered my chamber. He abruptly inquired how I found myself; and, seating himself by the side of my bed, began to converse on family affairs. I was too feeble to say much; and he had not the delicacy to consider that my nurse, Mrs. Jones, who was almost a stranger to me, was a witness to our conversation.

"Well!" said Mr. Harris, "and

what do you mean to do with your child?"

I made no answer.

"I will tell you," added he; "Tie it to your back and work for it."

I shivered with horror.

"Prison doors are open," continued Mr. Harris. "Tom will die in a gaol; and what is to become of you?"

I remained silent.

Miss Robinson now made her visit. She looked at me without uttering a syllable; but, while she contemplated my infant's features, her innocent sleeping face, her little dimpled hands folded on her breast, she murmured, "Poor little wretch! Poor thing! It would be a mercy if it pleased God to take it!" My agony of mind was scarcely supportable.—

"About three weeks after this period,

letters arrived, informing Mr. Robinson that his creditors were still inexorable, and that the place of his concealment was known. He was cautioned not to run the hazard of an arrest; indeed he knew that such an event would complete his ruin with Mr. Harris, from whom he should not receive any assistance. He communicated this intelligence to me; and at the same time informed me, that he must absolutely depart from Trevecca immediately. I was still extremely feeble, for my mental sufferings had impaired my corporeal strength almost as much as the perils I had recently encountered. But the idea of remaining at Trevecca without my husband was more terrible than the prospect of annihilation; and I replied without a hesitating thought, "I am ready to go with you."—

My good nurse, who was a very amiable woman, and under forty years of age, conjured me to delay my journey. She informed me that it would be dangerous to undertake it, in my then weak state. My husband's liberty was in danger, and my life appeared of little importance; for even at that early period of my days I was already weary of existence.

On the succeeding morning we departed. Mrs. Jones insisted on accompanying me on my first day's journey. Mr. Robinson, my nurse, and myself, occupied a post-chaise; my Maria was placed on a pillow on Mrs. Jones's lap. The paleness of death overspread my countenance; and the poor honest people of the mountains and the villages saw us depart with sorrow, though not without their blessings. Neither Mr.

Harris, nor the *enlightened females* of Tregunter, expressed the smallest regret or solicitude on the occasion. We reached Abergavenny that evening. My little remaining strength was exhausted, and I could proceed no further. However singular these persecutions may appear, Mr. Robinson knows that they are not in the smallest degree exaggerated.—

At Abergavenny I parted from Mrs. Jones; and, having no domestic with me, was left to take the intire charge of Maria. Reared in the tender lap of affluence, I had learnt but little of domestic occupations: the adorning part of education had been lavished, but the useful had never been bestowed upon a girl who was considered as born to independence. With these disadvantages I felt very aukwardly situated, under the ardu-

ous task I had to perform; but necessity soon prevailed with the soft voice of maternal affection, and I obeyed her dictates as the dictates of nature.

Mrs. Jones, whose excellent heart sympathized in all I suffered, would not have parted from me in so delicate a moment; but she was the widow of a tradesman at Brecon, and having quitted her home, where she had left two daughters (very pretty young women *,) to attend me, she was under the necessity of returning to them. With repeated good wishes, and some tears of regret flowing from her feeling and gentle heart, we parted.

On the following day we proceeded to Monmouth. Some relations of my mother residing there, particularly

* One of them married Mr. Bence, a hoop-maker, near Somerset-house in the Strand.

my grandmother, I wished to remain there till my strength was somewhat restored We were received with genuine affection; we were caressed with unfeigned hospitality. The good and venerable object of my visit was delighted to embrace her *great grand-child*; and the family fire-side was frequently a scene of calm and pleasing conversation. How different were these moments from those which I had passed with the low-minded inhabitants of Tregunter!

My grandmother, though then near seventy years of age, was still a pleasing woman; she had in her youth been delicately beautiful: and the neat simplicity of her dress, which was always either brown or black silk, the piety of her mind, and the mildness of her nature, combined to render her a most endearing object.

As soon as my strength recovered, I was invited to partake of many pleasant entertainments. But the most favourite amusement I selected was that of wandering by the river Wye; or of exploring the antique remains of Monmouth-castle, a part of which reached the garden of my grandmother's habitation. I also constantly accompanied my amiable and venerable relative to church; and I have often observed, with a mixture of delight and *almost* of envy, the tranquil resignation which religion diffused over her mind, even at the very close of human existence. This excellent woman expired of a gradual decay in the year 1780.

We had resided at Monmouth about a month, when I was invited to a ball. My spirits and strength had been renovated by the change of sce-

nery, and I was persuaded to dance. I was at that time particularly fond of the amusement, and my partial friends flattered me by saying that I measured the mazy figure like a Sylph. I was at that period a nurse; and, during the evening, Maria was brought to an anti-chamber to receive the only support she had ever yet taken. Unconscious of the danger attendant on such an event, I gave her her accustomed nourishment immediately after dancing. It was agitated by the violence of exercise and the heat of the ball-room; and, on my return home, I found my infant in strong convulsions.

My distraction, my despair, were terrible: my state of mind rendered it impossible for me to afford any internal nourishment to the child, even when her little mouth was parched, or the fit in the smallest degree abated.

I was little less than frantic: all the night I sat with her on my arms: an eminent medical man attended,—the convulsions continued, and my situation was terrible: those who witnessed it cautiously avoided informing me that the peril of my infant proceeded from my dancing: had I known it at that moment, I really believe I should have lost my senses.

In this desperate state, with only short intervals of rest, my darling continued till the morning: all my friends came to make inquiries; and, among others, a clergyman who visited at my grandmother's. He saw the child, as it was thought, expiring: he saw me still sitting where I had taken my place of despair on the preceding night, fixed in the stupor of unutterable affliction. He conjured me to let the child be removed: I was in a

raging fever; the effects of not having nourished my child during twelve hours began to endanger my own existence; and I looked forward to my dissolution as the happiest event that could befal me.

Still Maria lay upon my lap; and still I resisted every attempt that was made to remove her. Just at this period, the clergyman recollected that he had seen one of his own children relieved from convulsions by a simple experiment; and he requested my permission to try its effects. The child was given over by my medical attendant, and I replied, "However desperate the remedy, I conjure you to administer it."

He now mixed a table spoon-full of spirit of anniseed, with a small quantity of spermaceti, and gave it to my infant. In a few minutes the con-

vulsive spasms abated; and in less than an hour she sunk into a sweet and tranquil slumber. What I felt may be pictured to a fond *mother's* fancy; but my pen would fail in attempting to describe it.

Some circumstances now occurred which gave Mr. Robinson reason to believe that he was not safe at Monmouth, and we prepared for a removal to some other quarter. The day was fixed for commencing our journey, when an execution arrived for a considerable sum, and Mr. Robinson was no longer at liberty to travel. My alarm was infinite: the sum was too large for the possibility of liquidation; and, knowing Mr. Robinson's desperate fortune, I thought it unjust, as well as ungenerous, to attempt the borrowing it. Fortunately, the sheriff for the county was a friend

of the family. He was a gentlemanly and amiable man, and offered (to avoid any unpleasant dilemma,) to accompany us to London. We set out the same evening, and never slept till we arrived in the metropolis.

I immediately hastened to my mother, who resided in Buckingham-street, York-buildings, now the Adelphi. Her joy was boundless; she kissed me a thousand times; she kissed my beautiful infant; while Mr. Robinson employed the day in accommodating the business which had brought him to London. He had been arrested by *a friend*, with a hope that so near a father's habitation, such a sum would have been paid; at least such is the reason since assigned for such *unfriendly* conduct!

The matter was however arranged

on an explanation taking place; and Mr. Robinson engaged a lodging near Berners-street, whither we repaired on the same evening.

My little collection of poems, which I had arranged for publication, and which had been ready ever since my marriage, I now determined to print immediately. They were indeed trifles, very trifles—I since perused them with a blush of self-reproof, and wondered how I could venture on presenting them to the public. I trust that there is not a copy remaining, excepting that which my dear *partial* mother fondly preserved, and which is now in my possession.

I had been in town a few days, when some female friends persuaded me to accompany a party which they had formed to Ranelagh. Mr. Robinson declined going; but, after much

entreaty, I consented. I had now been married nearly two years; my person was considerably improved; I was grown taller than when I became Mr. Robinson's wife; and I had now more the manners of a woman of the world than those of girlish simplicity, which had hitherto characterized me, though I had been some months absent from London, and a part of them rusticated among mountains.

The dress which I wore was plain and simple: it was composed of pale lilac lustring. My head had a wreath of white flowers; I was complimented on my looks by the whole party; and with little relish for public amusements, and a heart throbbing with domestic solicitude, I accompanied the party to Ranelagh.

The first person I saw on entering the rotunda was George Robert Fitz-

gerald: he started as if he had received an electrical shock. I turned my head away, and would have avoided him; but he instantly quitted two friends, with whom he was walking, and presented himself to me. He expressed great pleasure at seeing me once more in "the world;" was surprised at finding me for the *first time* in public without my husband, and requested permission to pay his respects to me at my house. I replied that I was "on a visit to some friends." He bowed, and rejoined his companions.

During the evening, however, he never ceased to follow me. We quitted the rotunda early; and, as we were waiting for the carriage, I again observed Fitzgerald in the antichamber. We passed the vestibule and at the door his own carriage was drawn up.

On the following noon I was correcting a proof sheet of my volume, when the servant abruptly announced Mr. Fitzgerald!

I was somewhat disconcerted by this unexpected visit, and received Mr. Fitzgerald with a cold and embarrassed mien, which evidently mortified him: I also felt a little worldly vanity in the moment of surprise, for my morning dress was more calculated to display maternal assiduity than elegant and tasteful dishabille. In a small basket near my chair slept my little Maria; my table was spread with papers; and every thing around me presented the mixed confusion of a study and a nursery.

From the period of Mrs. Jones's quitting me at Abergavenny, I had made it an invariable rule always to dress and undress my infant, and never

suffered it to be placed in a cradle, nor to be fed out of my presence. A basket of an oblong shape, with four handles (with a pillow and a small bolster) was her bed by day: at night she slept with me. I had too often heard of the neglect which servants show to young children, and I resolved never to expose an infant of mine either to their ignorance or inattention. It was amidst the duties of a parent, that the gay, the high-fashioned Fitzgerald now found me: and whenever either business or, very rarely, public amusements drew me from the occupation, my mother never failed to be my substitute.

Mr. Fitzgerald said a thousand civil things; but that which charmed me was the admiration of my child. He declared that he had never seen so young a mother, or so beautiful an

infant. For the first remark I sighed; but the last delighted my bosom: she indeed was one of the prettiest little mortals that ever the sun shone upon.

The next subject of praise was my poetry. I smile while I recollect how far the effrontery of flattery has power to belie the judgment. Mr. Fitzgerald took up the proof sheet and read one of the pastorals. I inquired by what means he had discovered my place of residence: he informed me that his carriage had followed me home on the preceeding night. He now took his leave.

On the following evening he made us another visit;—I say us, because Mr. Robinson was at home. Mr. Fitzgerald drank tea with us, and proposed making a party on the next day to dine at Richmond. To this I gave a decided negative; alleging

that my duty towards my child prevented the possibility of passing a day absent from her.

On the Wednesday following Mr. Robinson accompanied me again to Ranelagh: there we met Lord Northington, Lord Lyttelton, Captain O'Bryan, Captain Ayscough, Mr. Andrews, and several others, who all, in the course of the evening, evinced their attentions: but as Mr. Robinson's deranged state of affairs did not admit of our receiving parties at home, I made my excuses, by saying, that we were at a friend's house, and not yet established in a town residence. Lord Lyttelton was particulary importunate; but he received the same answer which I had given to every other inquirer.

A short time after Mr. Robinson was arrested. Now came my hour of trial. He was conveyed to the

house of a sheriff's officer, and in a few days detainers were lodged against him to the amount of twelve hundred pounds, chiefly the arrears of annuities, and other demands from Jew creditors; for I can proudly and with truth declare, that he did not at that time, *or at any period since*, owe fifty pounds for *me*, or to any tradesman whatever on *my* account.

Mr. Robinson knew that it would be useless to ask Mr. Harris's assistance: indeed his mind was too much depressed to make an exertion for the arrangement of his affairs. He was, therefore, after waiting three weeks in the custody of a sherriff's officer, (during which time I never left him for a single hour, day or night) obliged to submit to the necessity of becoming a captive.

For myself I cared but little: all

my anxiety was for Mr. Robinson's repose, and the health of my child. The apartment which we obtained was in the upper part of the building, overlooking a racquet-ground. Mr. Robinson was expert in all exercises of strength, or activity, and he found that amusement daily which I could not partake of. I had other occupations of a more interesting nature, the care of a beloved and still helpless daughter.

During nine months and three weeks never once did I pass the threshold of our dreary habitation; though every allurement was offered, every effort was made, to draw me from my scene of domestic attachment. Numberless messages and letters from Lords Northington and Lyttelton, from Mr. Fitzgerald, and many others, were conveyed to me. But they all, ex-

cepting Lord Northington's, were dictated in the language of gallantry, were replete with profusions of *love*, and wishes to release me from my unpleasant and humiliating situation—and were therefore treated with contempt, scorn, and indignation. For God can bear witness that, at that period, my mind had never entertained a thought of violating those vows which I had made to my husband at the altar.

What I suffered during this tedious captivity! — My little volume of Poems sold but indifferently: my health was considerably impaired; and the trifling income which Mr. Robinson received from his father was scarcely sufficient to support him. I will not enter into a tedious detail of vulgar sorrows, of vulgar scenes: I seldom quitted my apartment, and

never till the evening, when for air and exercise I walked on the racquet-ground with my husband.

It was during one of these night walks that my little daughter first blessed my ears with the articulation of words. The circumstance made a forcible and indelible impression on my mind. It was a clear moonlight evening: the infant was in the arms of her nursery maid: she was dancing her up and down, and I was playing with her: her eyes were fixed upon the moon, to which she pointed with her small fore-finger:—on a sudden a cloud passed over it, and the child, with a slow falling of her hand, articulately sighed, "*all gone!*" This had been a customary expression with her maid, whenever the infant wanted any thing which it was deemed prudent to withhold or to hide

from her. These little nothings will appear insignificant to the common reader; but to the parent, whose heart is ennobled by sensibility, they will become matters of important interest. I can only add, that I walked till near midnight, watching every cloud that passed over the moon, and as often, with a rapturous sensation, hearing my little pratler repeat her observation.

Having much leisure and many melancholy hours, I again turned my thoughts towards the Muses. I chose *Captivity* for the subject of my pen, and soon composed a quarto poem of some length: it was superior to my former productions; but it was full of defects, replete with weak or laboured lines. I never now read my early compositions without a suffusion on my cheek, which marks my humble opinion of them.

At this period I was informed that the Duchess of Devonshire was the admirer and patroness of literature: with a mixture of timidity and hope I sent Her Grace a neatly bound volume of my poems, accompanied by a short letter apologizing for their defects, and pleading my age as the only excuse for their inaccuracy. My brother, who was a charming youth, was the bearer of my first literary offering at the shrine of nobility. The Duchess admitted him; and, with the most generous and amiable sensibility, inquired some particulars respecting my situation, with a request that on the following day I would make her a visit.—

I knew not what to do. Her liberality claimed my compliance: yet, as I had never, during my husband's long captivity, quitted him for half an hour,

I felt a sort of reluctance that pained the romantic firmness of my mind, while I meditated what I considered as a breach of my domestic attachment. However, at the particular and earnest request of Mr. Robinson, I consented; and accordingly accepted the Duchess's invitation.

During my seclusion from the world I had adapted my dress to my situation. Neatness was at all times my pride; but now plainness was the conformity to necessity: simple habiliments became the abode of adversity; and the plain brown satin gown, which I wore on my first visit to the Duchess of Devonshire, appeared to me as strange as a birth-day court-suit to a newly-married citizen's daughter.

To describe the Duchess's look and manner, when she entered the back

drawing-room of Devonshire-house, would be impracticable: mildness and sensibility beamed in her eyes, and irradiated her countenance. She expressed her surprise at seeing so young a person, who had already experienced such vicissitude of fortune: she lamented that my destiny was so little proportioned to what she was pleased to term my desert; and with a tear of gentle sympathy requested that I would accept a proof her good wishes. I had not words to express my feelings, and was departing, when the Duchess requested me to call on her very often, and to bring my little daughter with me.

I made frequent visits to the amiable Duchess, and was at all times received with the warmest proofs of friendship. My little girl, to whom I was still a nurse, generally accompa-

nied me, and always experienced the kindest caresses from my admired patroness, my liberal and affectionate friend. Frequently the Duchess inquired most minutely into the story of my sorrows, and as often gave me tears of the most spontaneous sympathy. But, such was my destiny, that while I cultivated the esteem of this best of women, by a conduct which was above the reach of reprobation, my husband, even though I was the partner of his captivity, the devoted slave to his necessities, indulged in the lowest and most degrading intrigues: frequently, during my short absence with the Duchess, for I never quitted the prison but to obey her summons, he was known to admit the most abandoned of their sex; women whose low licentious lives were such as to render them the shame and outcasts of so-

ciety. These disgraceful meetings were arranged, even while I was in my own apartment, in a next room, and by the assistance of an Italian who was also there a captive. I was apprised of the proceeding, and I questioned Mr. Robinson upon the subject. He denied the charge; but I availed myself of an opportunity that offered, and was convinced that my husband's infidelities were both frequent and disgraceful.

Still I pursued my plan of the most rigid domestic propriety: still I preserved my faith inviolate, my name unsullied. At times I endured the most poignant sufferings; from the pain of disappointed hope, and the pressure of pecuniary distresses.

During my long seclusion from society, for I could not associate with those whom destiny had placed in a

similar predicament, not one of my female friends even inquired what was become of me. Those who had been protected and received with the most cordial hospitality by me, in my more happy hours, now neglected all the kind condolence of sympathetic feeling, and shunned both me and my dreary habitation. From that hour I have never felt the affection for my own sex which perhaps some women feel: I have never taught my heart to cherish their friendship, or to depend on their attentions beyond the short perspective of a prosperous day. Indeed I have almost uniformly found my own sex my most inveterate enemies; I have experienced little kindness from them; though my bosom has often ached with the pang inflicted by their envy, slander, and malevolence.

The Italian, whom I took occasion to mention as the *Cicerone* of my husband's gallantries, was named Albanesi. He was the husband to a beautiful Roman woman of that name, who had some years before attracted considerable attention in the hemisphere of gallantry, where she had shone as a brilliant constellation. She had formerly been the mistress of a Prince de Courland, and afterwards of the Count de Belgioso, the Imperial Ambassador: but at the period in which I first saw her, she was, I believe, devoted to a life of unrestrained impropriety. She frequently came to visit her husband, who had held a situation in the Opera-house during the management of Mr. Hobart, now Earl of Buckinghamshire. I remember that she was one of the handsomest women I had ever seen, and that her dress was the most extra-

vagantly splendid. Satins, richly embroidered, or trimmed with point lace, were her daily habiliments; and her personal attractions were considerably augmented by the peculiar dignity and grace with which she walked: in a few words, this woman was a striking sample of beauty and of profligacy.

Whenever she came to visit her *sposo*, she never failed to obtrude herself on my seclusion. Mr. Robinson rather encouraged than shunned her visits, and I was obliged to receive the beautiful Angelina, (for such was her Christian name,) however repugnant such an associate was to my feelings. At every interview, she took occasion to ridicule my romantic domestic attachment; laughed at my folly in wasting my youth (for I was not then eighteen years of age) in such a dis-

graceful obscurity; and pictured, in all the glow of fanciful scenery, the splendid life into which I might enter, if I would but know my own power, and break the fetters of matrimonial restriction. She once told me that she had mentioned to the Earl of Pembroke that there was a young married lady in the most humiliating captivity with her husband: she said that she had described my person, and that Lord Pembroke was ready to offer me his services.

This proposal fully proclaimed the meaning of Signiora Albanesi's visits; and I resolved in future to avoid all conversation with her. She was at that time between thirty and forty years of age, and her day of splendour was hourly sinking to the obscurity of neglect: she was nevertheless still reluctant to resign the daz-

zling meteors which fashion had scattered in her way; and, having sacrificed every personal feeling for the gratification of her vanity, she now sought to build a gaudy transient fabric on the destruction of another. In addition to her persuasions, her husband, Angelo Albanesi, constantly made the world of gallantry the subject of his conversation. Whole evenings has he sitten in our apartment telling long stories of intrigue; praising the liberality of one nobleman, the romantic chivalry of another, the sacrifice which a third had made to an adored object, and the splendid income which a fourth would bestow on any young lady of education and mental endowments, who would accept his protection, and be the partner of his fortune. I always smiled at Albanesi's innuendos; and I still

found some amusement in his society when he thought fit to divest his conversation of his favourite topic. This Italian, though neither young nor even tolerably well-looking, was uncommonly entertaining; he could sing, likewise imitate various musical instruments, was an excellent buffoon, and a very neat engraver: some of his plates were executed under the inspection of Sherwin, and he was considered as a very promising artist.

Were I to describe one half of what I suffered, during fifteen months captivity, the world would consider it as the invention of a novel. But Mr. Robinson knows what I endured; and how patiently, how correctly, I suited my mind to the strict propriety of wedded life: he knows that my duty as a wife was exemplary, my chastity

inviolate; he knows that neither poverty nor obscurity, neither the tauntings of the world nor his neglect, could tempt me even to the smallest error: he knows that I bore my afflicting humiliations with a cheerful, uncomplaining spirit; that I toiled honourably for his comfort; and that my attentions were exclusively dedicated to him and to my infant.

The period now arrived when Mr. Robinson, by setting aside some debts, and by giving fresh bonds and fresh securities for others, once more obtained his liberty. I immediately conveyed the intelligence to my lovely patroness the Duchess of Devonshire, and she wrote me a letter of kind congratulation: she was then at Chatsworth.

The first moments of emancipation were delightful to the senses. I

felt as though I had been newly born; I longed to see all my old and intimate associates, and almost forgot that they had so unworthily neglected me. Every thing that had passed now appeared like a melancholy vision. The gloom had dissolved, and a new perspective seemed to brighten before me.

The first place of public entertainment I went to was Vauxhall. I had frequently found occasion to observe a mournful constrast when I had quitted the elegant apartments of Devonshire-house to enter the dark galleries of a prison; but the sensation which I felt on hearing the music and beholding the gay throng, during this first visit in public, after so long a seclusion, was undescribable. During the evening we met many old acquaintances; some who pretended ig-

norance of our past embarrassments, and others who joined us with the ease of fashionable apathy: among these was Lord Lyttelton, who insolently remarked, "that notwithstanding all that had passed I was handsomer than ever."—I made no reply but by a look of scornful indignation, which silenced the bold the unfeeling commentator, and convinced him that, though fallen in fortune, I was still high in pride.

Mr. Robinson having once more obtained his liberty, how were we to subsist honourably and above reproach? He applied to his father, but every aid was refused: he could not follow his profession, because he had not completed his articles of clerkship. I resolved on turning my thoughts towards literary labour, and projected a variety of works, by which I hoped to

obtain at least a decent independence. Alas! how little did I then know either the fatigue or the hazard of mental occupations! How little did I foresee that the day would come, when my health would be impaired, yet my thoughts perpetually employed, in so destructive a pursuit! At the moment that I write this page, I feel in every fibre of my brain the fatal conviction that it is a *destroying labour*.

It was at this moment of anxiety, of hope, of fear, that my thoughts once more were turned to a dramatic life; and, walking with my husband in St. James's Park, late in the autumn, we were accosted by Mr. Brereton of Drury-lane theatre. I had not seen him during the last two years, and he seemed rejoiced in having met us. At that period we lodged at

Lyne's the confectioner in Old Bond-street. Mr. Brereton went home and dined with us; and after dinner the conversation turned on my partiality to the stage, which he earnestly recommended as a scene of great promise to what he termed my promising talents. The idea rushed like electricity through my brain: I asked Mr. Robinson's opinion, and he now readily consented to my making the trial. He had repeatedly written to his father, requesting even the smallest aid towards our support until he could embark in his profession; but every letter remained unanswered, and we had no hope but in our own mental exertions.

Some time after this period we removed to a more quiet situation, and occupied a very neat and comfortable suite of apartments in Newman-street.

I was then some months advanced in a state of domestic solicitude, and my health seemed in a precarious state, owing to my having too long devoted myself to the duties of a mother in nursing my eldest daughter Maria. It was in this lodging that, one morning, wholly unexpectedly, Mr. Brereton made us a second visit, bringing with him a friend, whom he introduced on entering the drawing-room. This stranger was Mr. Sheridan.

I was overwhelmed with confusion: I know not why, but I felt a sense of mortification when I observed that my appearance was carelessly *dishabille*, and my mind as little prepared for what I guessed to be the motive of his visit. I however soon recovered my recollection, and the theatre

was consequently the topic of discourse.

At Mr. Sheridan's earnest entreaties I recited some passages from Shakespeare: I was alarmed and timid; but the gentleness of his manners, and the impressive encouragement he gave me, dissipated my fears, and tempted me to go on.

Mr. Sheridan had then recently purchased a share of Drury-lane theatre, in conjunction with Mr. Lacey and Doctor Ford: he was already celebrated as the author of The Rivals and The Duenna, and his mind was evidently portrayed in his manners, which were strikingly and bewitchingly attractive.

The encouragement which I received in this essay, and the praises which Mr. Sheridan lavishly bestow-

ed, determined me to make a public trial of my talents; and several visits, which were rapidly repeated by Mr. Sheridan, at length produced an arrangement for that period. My intention was intimated to Mr. Garrick, who, though he had for some seasons retired from the stage, kindly promised protection, and as kindly undertook to be my tutor.

The only objection which I felt, to the idea of appearing on the stage, was my then increasing state of domestic solicitude. I was, at the period when Mr. Sheridan was first presented to me, some months advanced in that situation which afterwards, by the birth of Sophia, made me a second time a mother. Yet such was my imprudent fondness for Maria that I was still a nurse; and my constitution was very considerably impaired by the

effects of these combining circumstances.

An appointment was made in the Green-room of Drury-lane theatre. Mr. Garrick, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Brereton, and my husband, were present: I there recited the principal scenes of Juliet, Mr. Brereton repeating those of Romeo, and Mr. Garrick, without hesitation, fixed on that character as a trial part for my *début*.

It is impossible to describe the various emotions of hope and fear that possessed my mind when the important day was announced in the play-bills. I wrote to the Duchess of Devonshire at Chatsworth, informing her of my purposed trial, and received a kind letter of approbation, sanctioning my plan, and wishing me success. Every longing of my heart seemed now to be completely gratified; and, with

zeal bordering on delight, I prepared for my approaching effort.

Mr. Garrick had been indefatigable at the rehearsals; frequently going through the whole character of Romeo himself, until he was completely exhausted with the fatigue of recitation. This was only a short period before the death of that distinguished actor.

The theatre was crowded with fashionable spectators: the Green-room and Orchestra (where Mr. Garrick sat during the night) were thronged with critics. My dress was a pale pink satin, trimmed with crape, richly spangled with silver; my head was ornamented with white feathers, and my monumental suit, for the last scene, was white satin and completely plain; excepting that I wore a veil of the most transparent gauze, which

fell quite to my feet from the back to my head, and a string of beads round my waist, to which was suspended a cross appropriately fashioned.

When I approached the side wing my heart throbbed convulsively: I then began to fear that my resolution would fail, and I leaned upon the nurse's arm, almost fainting. Mr. Sheridan, and several other friends encouraged me to proceed; and at length, with trembling limbs and fearful apprehension, I approached the audience.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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